New Welding Fumes 2019 - Respirator

Change in Enforcement Expectations for mild steel welding fumes from February 2019

Introduction:
There is new scientific evidence from the International Agency for Research on Cancer that exposure to mild steel welding fume can cause lung cancer and possibly kidney cancer in humans. The Workplace Health Expert Committee has endorsed the reclassification of mild steel welding fume as a human carcinogen.Target audience:All workers, employers, self-employed, contractors' and any others who undertake welding activities, including mild steel, in any industry.

Consequences:
With immediate effect, there is a strengthening of HSE's enforcement expectation for all welding fume, including mild steel welding; because general ventilation does not achieve the necessary control.

Outcome:
Control of the cancer risk will require suitable engineering controls for all welding activities indoors e.g. Local Exhaust Ventilation (LEV). Extraction will also control exposure to manganese, which is present in mild steel welding fume, which can cause neurological effects similar to Parkinson's disease.
Where LEV alone does not adequately control exposure, it should be supplemented by adequate and suitable respiratory protective equipment (RPE) to protect against the residual fume.Appropriate RPE should be provided for welding outdoors. You should ensure welders are suitably instructed and trained in the use of these controls.
Regardless of duration, HSE will no longer accept any welding undertaken without any suitable exposure control measures in place, as there is no known level of safe exposure.
Risk assessments should reflect the change in the expected control measures.

Action required:
- Make sure exposure to any welding fume released is adequately controlled using engineering controls (typically LEV).
- Make sure suitable controls are provided for all welding activities, irrelevant of duration. This includes welding outdoors.
- Where engineering controls alone cannot control exposure, then adequate and suitable RPE should be provided to control risk from any residual fume.
- Make sure all engineering controls are correctly used, suitably maintained and are subject to thorough examination and test where required.
- Make sure any RPE is subject to an RPE programme. An RPE programme encapsulates all the elements of RPE use. You need to ensure that your RPE is effective in protecting the wearer.

Wise Safety can assist with face fit testing, setting up an RPE programme, correct storage and maintenance and all other relevant documentation.

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