



Hazard Alert UPDATE

Spray-on urethane truck bed liner worker dies after isocyanate exposure

Important

A [recent report](#) from Michigan describes how a man in his mid-forties died from an acute asthmatic attack after installing a spray-on bed liner in a van. Although no fatalities have been recorded in Washington State, in March 2003 the Department of Labor and Industries (L&I) issued a "[Hazard Alert](#)" to businesses that apply spray-on truck-bed linings. This document alerts employers to potential worker health hazards from exposure to isocyanates, which are components of the urethane, polyurethane or polyurea coatings.

The [Michigan report](#) provides further description of the incident. The deceased's helper found him outside of the building, on his knees gasping for breath. Attempts at CPR were unsuccessful; he was pronounced dead 46 minutes later, after being transported to a hospital. The medical examiners impression was "asthmatic reaction due to inhalation of chemicals."

After he died, his co-workers mentioned that he had difficulty breathing after previous spray liner applications.

According to the Michigan report:

"This death highlights the dangers to workers of the use of new technology by small employers who do not have the expertise or infrastructure to adequately address health and safety issues."

A key finding in the Michigan report is that this fatality occurred even though the individual was using appropriate respiratory protection—a positive pressure respirator with supplied fresh air. This highlights the need to ensure that respirators and other personal protective equipment are maintained and that workers receive appropriate training in their use. The Michigan Fatality Assessment and Control Evaluation (FACE) program has also released a [detailed description](#) of this incident.

An estimated 200 businesses in Washington are involved in spraying on truck-bed liners. Most of them are in the Puget Sound region, but some are also in southwest and eastern Washington. Spray-on truck-bed lining is a newer industry that has expanded rapidly in the past five years. Several cases of asthma have been found in truck-bed lining workers in Washington.

L&I offers free consultation services to measure isocyanate exposure and discuss preventative and protective measures. Also, the agency is conducting targeted inspections in the spray-on truck-bed industry that could result in fines to employers who are not in compliance with the safety and health regulations.

More information is available at www.LNI.wa.gov/safety/ or by calling 800-423-7233 (4BE-SAFE). To receive a copy of the Spray-on Urethane Truck Bed Linings and Isocyanate Exposures Hazard Alert, call 360-902-5452.