



Online Ethics Center
FOR ENGINEERING AND SCIENCE

Lamination Press Layout

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Description

An engineer discovers potentially hazardous dust in the company press room.

Body

An industrial engineer was recently hired by a printed circuit boards manufacturer to do process layout design. The engineer was assigned to do a re-layout of the lamination press room. She started by analyzing each one of the process steps to optimize space and process time. While conducting her study she found that the company was using a manual puncher in this area to punch alignment holes in the inner layer material. She noticed that the room was covered with dust and a white material. When she asked the operator what this material was, she was told that it was fiberglass that came from the inner layer material. (The inner layer material was composed of several layers of fiberglass coated with epoxy.)

Concerned about possible adverse health effects, the engineer visited the Environmental and Safety Department and requested an MSDS (Material Safety Data Sheet) of the inner layer material. She was shocked to find out that that the material dust causes respiratory complications, even cancer, when breathed into the lungs.

She returned to the lamination press room and asked the operator how long she had worked in this area. The operator replied that it would be ten years the next month.

Should the engineer tell the operator about the risk she had been running for the last ten years?

What other steps, if any, should she take now? What is the engineer's responsibility?

Notes

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