

Dear Valued Customer,

On May 21, 2007, a settlement was reached with OSHA on specifics relating to hexavalent chromium levels permissible in the workplace. The Specialty Steel Industry of North America (SSINA) and the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM) had sought relief for businesses that produce or use stainless steel or super alloys while fully protecting worker safety.

One of the areas in which relief was sought was welding on stainless or chromium-containing steel in an enclosed, semi-confined or confined space.

Previously, under the Final Rule, the employer first had to use engineering and work practice controls to control the employee's exposure, even when uncertain that the PEL actually could be achieved. As part of the settlement, employers may now provide respiratory protection for employees under those circumstances. Because fumes can become trapped in an enclosed space, respiratory protection is often the most effective means of protecting employees.

Additionally, the Settlement Agreement provides an important interpretation on how employers may dispose of hexavalent chromium-containing materials that are large or cumbersome.

The agreement letter from OSHA and additional information on the settlement can be found at the OSHA Web site www.osha.gov

As part of this settlement, SSINA and the NAM are withdrawing their petition for review of the Final Rule. Public Citizen has appealed for a lower PEL. SSINA and the NAM are now seeking to intervene in the action to avoid further tightening of the rule.

Most service centers do not exceed the permissible exposure limit for hexavalent chromium or Cr(VI) compounds – of 5 micrograms per cubic meter of air as an 8-hour time-weighted average. But some downstream customers who are performing welding can be affected by the OSHA ruling. OSHA will issue additional letters of clarification as their inspectors begin enforcing the provisions

If you have additional questions you may **contact Elisabeth Torsner, Vice President, Market Development/Technical Coordinator for Outokumpu at 765-529-0120.**

Best Regards,

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