SUBJECT: Medical Surveillance Programs that Require Genetic Information


PURPOSE: This directive provides an interpretation of health standards that require medical surveillance programs specifying a medical history with family and occupational background, including genetic and environmental factors.

SCOPE: This instruction applies to all of Oregon OSHA.

RULES AFFECTED: This interpretation applies to all rules that require a medical surveillance program in which the medical examination must include a personal history of the employee or their family and occupational background, including genetic and environmental factors. These standards are:

A. 1910.1003, 13 Carcinogens.


BACKGROUND: In February 1980, the New York Times published a series of articles on genetic testing. The fourth and final installment of the series did not accurately describe OSHA policies on this issue. OSHA’s press release USDL 80-107, dated February 20, 1980, clarified OSHA's policy. This instruction provides official guidance to field offices on this policy.

INTERPRETATION: The provisions of the standards listed in this directive must be interpreted as follows:

A. These provisions do not require genetic testing of any employee.

B. Taking an employee's medical history, including family history (e.g., inheritable disorders) and occupational history, must be considered a routine part of standard medical practice and is designed to identify factors important to the employee's general health status.
C. These provisions do not require the exclusion of otherwise qualified employees from jobs on the basis of genetic testing.

**EFFECTIVE DATE:** This directive is effective immediately and will remain in effect until cancelled or superseded.