

OSHA BERYLLIUM RULE: **MYTH VS FACT**

OSHA continues to reevaluate its rule regulating worker exposure to beryllium, which does not require compliance until March 12, 2018. The Abrasive Blasting Manufacturers Alliance has been aggressively communicating to OSHA, the Administration and Members of Congress about the negative impact this misguided rule will have on our industry and the well-paying jobs it provides across the country.

We're having an impact. OSHA is considering a substantial rewrite of the Beryllium rule as it relates to the abrasive blasting industry. In the meantime, it's important to separate myth from reality and understand the OSHA rule for what it is.



MYTH: The Beryllium rule only affects blasting media containing slag. As long as I switch to a non-slag product, I don't have to deal with the Beryllium rule.

FACT: The rule affects all abrasive blasters. All blasting media and the surfaces being blasted can contain trace amounts of beryllium, which is naturally occurring in the environment. Because OSHA would set a very restrictive action level and exposure limit to beryllium, all blasters would need to comply with the regulations regardless of media.



MYTH: New regulations on abrasive blasting are inevitable in the near future. I need to switch to blasting media that are least likely to be swept up in these regulatory changes.

FACT: Abrasive blasting is already subject to 27 OSHA safety regulations, which is the basis of our push to remove our industry from the Beryllium rule. It's a winning argument, and we've seen it pay major dividends: OSHA has delayed the rule twice, and now it is reconsidering the application of the rule to our industry.

There has never been a documented case of worker illness related to beryllium exposure in abrasive blasting, due in large part to the number of safety regulations already on the books for our industry. The government overreached when it included abrasive blasting in the Beryllium rule.



MYTH: The final OSHA rule went into effect May 20; it's final. I need to make quick decisions to keep my supply chain in compliance.

FACT: The OSHA rule does not require compliance until March 12, 2018. Nothing changes until then. Additionally, OSHA is reconsidering the application of the rule to the construction and maritime industries.

Current OSHA leadership takes a different approach to business regulation than its predecessor. We believe this will work in our favor.



MYTH: I should switch from slag to another product anyway. It's less risky and just as effective – there's no cost to my company for making the switch.

FACT: Slag-based abrasives are the product of choice for many applications, and switching to an alternative media will have real costs in terms of direct spending and effectiveness. Also, again, all abrasive blasting with whatever media can be subject to the Beryllium rule.



MYTH: Whatever final rule comes out will crack down on slag, because it's hazardous. There's a "war on coal" for a reason.

FACT: All abrasive blast media, and the surfaces being blasted, can contain materials that are potentially harmful if there is direct exposure above certain levels. OSHA directly prescribes personal protective equipment for abrasive blasting, and slag-based abrasives are perfectly safe if existing OSHA regulations are followed.