

ANALYSIS OF HOUSE BILL 1890

Regulating the use of allergenic latex in health care facilities.

SPONSORS: Representatives Dy and Schual-Berke.

BACKGROUND: According to the Washington State Department of Labor & Industries B&I data on health providers, latex gloves are one of the most prevalent sources of occupational skin disorder in the state.

From a survey of 93 hospitals in the state, 30 percent reported having problems with latex allergies among employees in their facilities.

Approximately 500 dermatitis worker compensation claims are filed each year with L&I and about 1,100 (75 percent) of those were accepted.

It has been roughly estimated that up to 17 percent of health care workers are sensitive to latex allergen.

More than 60 percent of the hospitals in the state have made some type of glove alternatives available to affected employees. Four percent had designated latex-free zones and four percent had cleaned to remove latex dust.

SUMMARY: As of January 1, 2000, the use of powder latex products is prohibited in hospitals, rural health care facilities, nursing homes, community mental health centers, kidney disease treatment centers, ambulatory surgical centers, drug and alcohol treatment facilities, hospices, and home health agencies.

Such facilities are required to establish, upon the recommendations of the Department of Health, written policies and methods to prevent latex allergic reactions through the use of low-protein latex products.