OSHA has announced it will start enforcing the new beryllium exposure standards for general industry, construction and maritime on May 11, 2018. There are a number of requirements and deadlines for companies with potential beryllium exposures. Does this apply to your company, and are you ready?

**What is Beryllium?**

Beryllium is a lightweight but strong metal used in aerospace, telecommunications, information technology, defense, medical, and nuclear industries. It can be found in various items such as brake systems, missile parts, guidance systems, welding, alloys in dental crowns and bridges, laser devices, heat shields, computer parts, x-rays, golf clubs, bicycles and more. Exposure to beryllium comes through inhalation and through contact.

**What’s Required in the New Beryllium Standard?**

***Exposure Assessments and Limits***

If your workers are expected to be exposed to beryllium, you must conduct an exposure assessment using performance or scheduled monitoring methods. There are new standards for exposures, including:

* Reduction of the permissible exposure limit (PEL) to 0.2 micrograms per cubic meter, averaged over 8 hours;
* A new short-term exposure limit (STEL) of 2.0 micrograms per cubic meter over a 15 minute sampling period; and,
* An action level of 0.1 micrograms per cubic meter, calculated as an 8 hour time weighted average.

***Written Exposure Control Plan***

If workers will be exposed to beryllium, companies must prepare a written exposure control plan. **It doesn’t matter if you’re over the above limits – if you have the potential exposure, you need a written plan.** The plan must include a list of operations and job titles affected, procedures for minimizing cross contamination and keeping surfaces clean, required engineering controls/practices to be used, respiratory protection methods, required personal protective equipment (PPE), and procedures for handling contaminated PPE, clothing and respirators. The plan must be reviewed annually, updated as required, and available for employee review.

***PPE***

Companies must provide respiratory protection where exposure cannot be controlled and personal protective equipment separate from street clothing must be provided to limit skin contact. For protective clothing, change rooms and showers are to be provided and used. These rooms and showers must be in place by March 11, 2019.

***Beryllium Work Areas***

Engineering and work practice controls such as ventilation changes or enclosure must be developed to prevent excessive beryllium from becoming airborne. Engineering controls are due by March 10, 2020. In the meantime, beryllium work areas must be marked and have limited access. In construction, a competent person must be designated to mark these areas.

***Medical Monitoring***

Companies with beryllium exposures must offer medical exams to affected workers. If a worker has a beryllium-related disease, companies must offer additional workplace accommodations for them to protect them from additional exposure.

***Worker Training***

Affected workers must be trained in the hazards of beryllium. This must be done separately from Hazard Communication training and be specific to beryllium.

***Next Steps***

Are your workers exposed to beryllium? What are your exposures, and do you have the necessary protections in place? Let iSi conduct your monitoring to check. We can also help you with plans, PPE recommendations and training.