

# Lethal Red Tape



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**M**ILLIONS of American workers are exposed to deadly, poisonous substances on the job. Yet the effort to save their health, perhaps even their lives, has been seriously hampered by cutbacks and red tape.

The best estimate is that one out of every three workers in this country will come down with occupational diseases. Toxic substances according to another estimate, causes 100,000 job-related deaths each year.

Yet even this disturbing death figure is now considered far too low. Labor Department experts have just learned that most of the nation's doctors are unable to diagnose occupational diseases. This means that most deaths from occupational diseases go unreported.

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**T**HE LABOR EXPERTS have also discovered that occupational injuries account for an alarming 96 per cent of all reported illnesses at nonagricultural places of work. Yet, industrial plants provide few health services.

The Labor Department has appealed to Congress for more help to cope with the problem. Of 2000 industrial hygienists in the United States, only 135 work for the department.

As one Labor official said: "There is an appalling lack of manpower." Meanwhile, the problem steadily gets worse, not better, as thousands of new chemicals are developed each year.

The department has tried to set standards for these toxic chemicals as they appear. But President Ford, whose main emphasis is upon cutting costs, requires an inflationary impact statement before new standards can be put into effect. This has slowed the regulatory effort.

Nevertheless, a small, unsung staff is fighting a heroic battle to safeguard workers from occupational disease and death. Hundreds of thousands will die, however, because the problem has been given a low priority.

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**T**WO WEEKS before the world premiere last April of the Watergate movie, "All The President's Men," Robert Redford rejected a White House request to give President Ford a private advance showing. Co-star Redford told White House officials politely but firmly that Mr. Ford could have free tickets to the premiere at Washington's Kennedy Center where he could see the film "just like everyone else." Mr. Ford didn't show up for the premiere.

In one scene, Mr. Ford is shown announcing Richard Nixon's nomination in 1972. Actually, a second Ford scene was considered as the film's finale. It would have shown Mr. Ford bidding good-by to Nixon as he flew from the White House in a helicopter.

Redford told us he vetoed the scene for artistic, not political, reasons.