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## OSHA Statement on 2-Butoxyethanol & Worker Exposure

Last week (7/9/10), the New York Times online published an article with the misleading headline: "New BP Data Show 20% of Gulf Spill Responders Exposed to Chemical That Sickened *Valdez* Workers." This article has been republished or reported by other media outlets and websites.

In its continuing effort to ensure that Gulf oil spill cleanup workers are protected, OSHA has analyzed the raw data on which the article was based. The headline is based on an incorrect interpretation of a misleading chart produced by BP. OSHA's analysis of the raw data reaches a very different conclusion.

OSHA's analysis found the following:

Approximately 80% of the 1048 samples BP analyzed showed "no detectable level" of 2-butoxyethanol. Of the remaining 20% (n=213) of the samples with any detectable 2-butoxyethanol, the highest level measured was 0.8 ppm, and 90% of these were 0.2 ppm or less. Every measurement was well below the NIOSH recommended limit of 5.0 ppm.

In addition, it is not true, as the headline stated, that 20% of workers in the oil spill cleanup were exposed to 2-butoxyethanol. Sampling is not done randomly and is not necessarily representative of all exposed workers; in general, sampling is performed on workers who are most likely to have the heaviest exposures.

Of the samples with any detectable level of 2-butoxyethanol, 89% were taken near the source of the oil, where dispersant is being sprayed. Workers on boats near the source are provided respiratory protection. No sample taken on a near shore vessel detected a level above 0.1 ppm.

These analyses can also be seen in [charts prepared by OSHA](#).

In summary, it is not true that 20% of gulf spill responders have been exposed to 2-butoxyethanol. Most exposure measurements found no exposure to the chemical, and all exposure levels detected were well below any occupational exposure limit.

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