Reviewer's report

Title: Accidental exposure to gas emissions from transit goods treated for pest control.

Version: 2 Date: 8 September 2014

Reviewer: Geoffrey M Calvert

Reviewer's report:

This report describes biomonitoring conducted on workers at a medium sized company importing electronic construction parts. Biomonitoring was conducted on six workers suspected of ethylene oxide and methyl bromide intoxication. Laboratory confirmation of intoxication was present for three of six patients.

I have several major concerns with this paper:

1. It is not well-written and is very difficult to follow.
2. It’s not clear what is novel about this report.
3. It isn’t clear why this certain medium sized company was chosen for study. Is this the only company known to have had this problem?
4. Very little information is provided for what these workers were exposed to. Did the investigators determine the source of the shipments thought to be responsible for the exposure? What country were they shipped from? What specific parts were shipped? What fumigant was used to treat those shipments?
5. No information provided on how these events came to the attention of the authorities/authors.
6. If events occurred in 2010-2012, why was the investigation delayed until 2013?
7. No epidemiology provided for why laboratory confirmation of intoxication was present for three of six patients. What was different about the other three “negative” patients? Did their tasks differ or duration of exposure differ compared to the “positive” workers?
8. Little info was available on how to prevent these incidents. According to the authors, fumigation is required when using wood packaging, or shipping wood parts or flooring material. Since the company under study imported electronic construction parts, it seems wood parts or flooring material is not the problem. Could the problem be avoided by not using wood packaging?
9. If the company knew the parts were fumigated, what procedures were undertaken to prevent exposure? Are the parts aerated? What type of ventilation is provided in the area where these parts are unpacked and stored? Is the air monitored for the presence of fumigants to ensure that the area is safe to work in?
10. No information on when (month and year) the exposures occurred.
11. On several pages, a “governmental hygienist” is mentioned, but not from which country or which governmental agency.

**Level of interest:** An article of limited interest

**Quality of written English:** Not suitable for publication unless extensively edited

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

'I declare that I have no competing interests'