**Artículo**


**Titulo**

*Occupational skin disease in the construction industry.*
(Enfermedades de la piel de origen laboral en el sector de la construcción)

**Autores**

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**Abstract**

**BACKGROUND:**
Construction workers have a substantial risk of developing irritant and/or allergic contact dermatitis. Unfortunately, however, there is little population-based epidemiological data relating to occupational skin diseases (OSD) in the European construction industry that allow assessment of preventive measures.

**OBJECTIVES:**
In this investigation, the yearly incidence rates and causes of OSD in the construction industry were analysed on the basis of our register in Northern Bavaria.

**METHODS:**
From 1990 until 1999, all incidences of OSD in the construction industry were recorded prospectively. This enables the calculation of incidence rates of OSD in relation to the employed population in Northern Bavaria as recorded by the German Federal Employment Office.

**RESULTS:**
In the construction industry, a total of 335 OSD were registered. These comprise 9.0% of all OSD in the register. We classified them into four relevant groups: (A) tile setters and terrazzo workers (incidence per 10 000 employees = 19.9); (B) painters (7.8); (C) construction and cement workers (5.2); and (D) wood processors (2.6). The overall incidence was 5.1 per 10 000 employees over 10 years, which is a little below average for the entire register (6.7). Of these, 43.6% were at least 40 years old. Allergic contact dermatitis (61.5%) occurred more often than irritant contact dermatitis (44.5%). Potassium dichromate caused roughly half of all cases of sensitization found to be occupationally relevant in the construction industry (152 cases) followed by epoxy resin (40) and cobalt chloride (32).

**CONCLUSIONS:**
The results indicate that potassium dichromate is still the most important allergen in the construction industry of Northern Bavaria; there has been no significant decline during the 1990s. This contrasts with the Scandinavian countries, where the prevalence of potassium dichromate sensitization declined following the reduction of chromium VI levels resulting from the addition of ferrous sulphate to cement. Within the construction industry, tile setters and terrazzo workers have a strikingly high incidence of OSD.
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