



1999

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Recommended Citation

Asamoah, Kofi (1999) "Recent Developments: Senate Bill 420: Workers' Compensation - Department of Natural Resources," *University of Baltimore Law Forum*: Vol. 29 : No. 2 , Article 33.
Available at: <http://scholarworks.law.ubalt.edu/lf/vol29/iss2/33>

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**SENATE BILL 420: WORKERS' COMPENSATION - DEPARTMENT OF
NATURAL RESOURCES**

By Kofi Asamoah

Senate Bill 420 (crossfiled with House Bill 311) was a consolidation of amendments to sections 9-207 and 9-503 of the Labor and Employment Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland. The amendment to section 9-207 of the Labor and Employment Article broadens the covered employees for workers compensation purposes in the Department of Natural Resources to include "a paid law enforcement employee." The prior provision covered only a registered crewmember or a firefighter of the Department of Natural Resources.

The amendment to section 9-503 seeks to broaden the scope of covered employees who are presumed to have an occupational disease covered under the Workers' Compensation Act. With this amendment, a paid law enforcement employee of the Department of Natural Resources is presumed to have a compensable occupational disease if the employee suffers from lyme disease that was not preexisting at the time the employee was assigned to a position in an outdoor environment.

Prior to the enactment of this Bill, the coverage for occupational diseases such as lyme disease was limited to paid police officers, fire-fighters, fire fighting instructors, state fire marshalls and deputy sheriffs. With the passage of this Bill, paid law enforcement employees of the Department of Natural Resources who contract lyme disease in the line of duty will be covered under the Workers Compensation Act.

These amendments became effective October 1, 1999.