J-M International
New York
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W. P. S. Breese - DHQ

EXPORT PACKAGING OF ASBESTOS FIBRE

You expressed an interest in the packaging and handling of asbestos fibre sold by us in overseas markets. It is very difficult to make a general statement for the whole world and I should like to try and summarize it for you.

The overwhelming proportion of the fibre shipped by CJM to overseas markets is in pressure packed jute bags. There are certain exceptions. All Floats, ie. the shortest grades of asbestos (7TF and 7RF), cannot be pressure packed and are always shipped in five ply valve type paper bags. They do not represent an important part of our business and the condition of these bags on arrival at ports of destination varies quite a bit depending on handling. A certain amount of breakage does occur.

Approximately 10% of our total export shipments is supplied in five ply pressure packed paper bags. Generally, customers are satisfied with this type of package, and except for occasional bursting or bag breakage, it provides for clean and neat warehousing conditions.

The rest of the fibre is in pressure packed jute bags and the principal industries in which asbestos is used are the asbestos cement industry, the floor tile industry, and the friction material manufacturing industry.

Most of the companies that receive fibre in jute bags try not to destroy them since they can resell them for a modest profit. In such cases, bags are unstitched at one end, emptied into bins, and then sold to outside sources which presumably clean them and use them for different needs.

Very few of us have ever witnessed the handling of asbestos between the Mine and the customer's warehouse. Generally, bags are loaded and unloaded

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from ships in slings and are then handled individually, usually by two men per bag. Except in cases of accidental breakage of bags, conditions in transport can be considered clean or dust free. This, of course, in comparison with the conditions which prevail in the factories in areas where asbestos is handled and emptied from bags.

The latter condition varies considerably from plant to plant and country to country. In most cases, in the Western European factory, management is aware of the necessity to control dust, and have provided for some dust control equipment of varying magnitude. As you go farther and farther from the industrialized countries to the less sophisticated developing economies, the dust control gets less attention and the conditions in the plants are more primitive.

The United Kingdom represents a unique situation in that not only must all the fibre imported from abroad be in "impervious" bags, but in addition there is a growing container service between Canada and the UK. The developing use of the container service makes it possible to load the fibre at the Mine into containers which remain sealed until the fibre is unloaded at the customer's warehouse on the other side of the ocean. Until now all fibre shipped to the UK by CJM had been in paper lined jute bags, but if the container service develops satisfactorily, we are considering shifting to five ply paper bags which are less expensive and carry no premium.

I believe it would be almost impossible to describe conditions in every country, not only because of the magnitude of such a task, but also, mainly because none of us can really give an accurate and authoritative statement of conditions. There is no doubt in my mind, however, that there is a great deal of difference in the degree of exposure by people who handle baged asbestos intransit throughout the world and by those who handle it in the manufacturing factories. This, however, would have to form the subject of a seperate discussion and in the meantime, I hope that the above proves to be of some assistance to you.

D. Poutiatine

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