cc: H. M. Hall
C. E. Ernst (5)

September 25, 1959

Mr. H. O. Blackburn, Safety Inspector
Pine Bluff Arsenal
Arsenal, Arkansas

Dear Mr. Blackburn:

Recently we spoke to this company asking for information concerning possible health hazards in the handling of 85% Magnesia products and their fabrication. I believe that the form given to a responsible person will be another company rep, Blackburn, if you wish to comment on this. However, it is a pleasure to advise you the following comments on 85% Magnesia.

This magnesia insulating product contains approximately 15% asbestos fibers. It is a recognized fact that if asbestos fibers are inhaled in sufficient quantity and over a considerably long period of time, a pulmonary disorder will develop. However, in our plant and while there approximately 5,000 people are producing in excess of 300,000 tons of asbestos annually, we have developed no new cases of asbestosis for many years. We have demonstrated that a proper industrial handling methods, as well as local ventilation will remove any health hazard which might exist.

It is possible that a minimal amount of asbestos fiber might become airborne if the pipeline block and pipe insulating material was cut or given some limited machining. Adequate exhaust ventilation and proper material handling should provide any environmental contamination. In addition, safety dust respirators are available for employees to wear in operations which are approved by the U. S. Bureau of Mines for pneumoconiosis-producing dusts.

I am going that I could furnish you information concerning disabling injuries resulting from installation of this insulating product. People who use this material are employees of shipbuilders and not their employees. Therefore I have no records concerning possible injuries. I believe that the potential health hazard is minimal for casting this year I received considerable training there and consulted with Government engineers and numerous other people, I could find no record or report indicating that there was a pulmonary health hazard associated with this compound.

If there is any additional information which you desire, or if I can help in any way, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Very truly yours,

Kenneth W. Smith, M.D.
Medical Director

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