May 9, 1957

Mr. L. J. Lambert, Vice President
Insulation Industries (Canada) Ltd.
1775 Melville Street
Vancouver 5, Canada

Dear Mr. Lambert:

Recently you wrote asking for my comments concerning a case of alleged asbestosis and also for information on the protection of your employees. I am attaching a copy of an article which will give you some information concerning our health experience among asbestos workers. As indicated in this article, experience in our mines and mills, where the potential exposure excessively could be greater than in a fabricating plant, has shown that it takes many years to develop asbestosis. In addition we have seen no pulmonary disability from asbestos unless there is a typical x-ray pattern.

Concerning your former employee, I do not believe that he could have developed asbestosis when he worked only one year and was not engaged in the actual mixing operations. It is possible that he had to have part of his lung removed for other reasons, and the pathologist found some microscopic evidence of inhaled asbestos fibres. The mere presence, however, of a few asbestos fibres on a pathologic section cannot support a diagnosis of clinical asbestosis.

On the other hand it is possible that the man did have clinical asbestosis contracted from exposure elsewhere. Thus it would be very interesting to know whether or not he had inhaled asbestos fibres while working for other employers. Also of interest would be the interpretation of x-rays before the operation and the clinical diagnosis prior to removal of the lung tissue.

Experiments carried out at the Saranac Laboratory and reported by Dr. E. J. Vorwald in the A. M. A. ARCHIVES OF INDUSTRIAL HYGIENE AND OCCUPATIONAL MEDICINE, January 1951, showed that asbestosis does not progress after exposure ceases. Clinical experience over many years in our various mines, mills, and factories has confirmed this experimental work. This would seem to be another indication that asbestosis could not have developed from your employment exposure when disability appeared eight years after the employee left your service.

In our mines and mills where approximately 2,000 people are producing in excess of 500,000 tons of asbestos annually, we are developing no cases of asbestosis today. This is made possible through proper material handling methods and local ventilation at a dust source so that the atmospheric contamination does not exceed the 5 million particles per cubic foot recommended by the American Conference of Governmental Industrial Hygienists. Dust counts taken during routine industrial hygiene surveys provide a check on our operating procedures. In addition periodic physical examinations including chest x-rays confirm the fact that our employees are not being harmed by their work. I am sure that these precautions, modified to suit your special needs, would provide adequate protection for your employees.

If I can be of any further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Very truly yours,

Kenneth W. Smith, M.D.
Medical Director

Enclosure
bcc: E. E. Hall
J. C. Kelleher