Johns-Manville

Internal Correspondence

To: J. A. McKinney, 1-03

Date: May 30, 1980

From: Paul Kotin, M.D., 1-03

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6-6-84

Kotin

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Subject: ASBESTOS POLICY

I am acutely distressed and somewhat bewildered by the confusion, almost anarchy, that has become manifest during the past week to 10 days in relation to a corporate policy on asbestos. You will recall that during our meeting earlier in May, I had been encouraged by the performance of Jim Reis and Wyatt McCallie. I still feel that they are doing excellent work, but they both have been responding to specific issues, and this reaction is certainly less desirable than the initiation of action.

Repeated instances during the past two weeks have reinforced my belief that in the periods between responding to crises we are failing to make any efforts in constructive and self-initiated directions. The hiatus between problems should provide opportunity to examine corporate policies, priorities and commitments in order to undertake positive programs in consumer education, customer liaison, noncrisis communications with the media, conferences with regulatory or executive agency personnel, etc. However, we are failing to take advantage of these periods.

Tragically, it appears there are an array of attitudes and priorities among the several groups in J-M involved with asbestos (AFD, operating divisions with asbestos products, operating divisions with competitive nonasbestos products, Corporate Relations, Corporate Marketing and HS&E). Specifically, there are conflicts around such issues as using the phrase "asbestos free" in advertisements for certain J-M products, determining the specific target audience for whatever public relations or advertising campaign we may engage in, and so on.

Another grave aspect of the present predicament is the general uncertainty and the depressing effect on morale that goes with our vacillation. And not less discouraging is the fact that in the absence of any firm policy, every little issue generates heated and involved discussion because there is no policy extant by which issues could be reviewed and a course of action determined.

Two things I am particularly concerned about are the lack of a commitment of adequate resources to address the asbestos situation thoroughly and the ineffective use of both Reis and McCallie. Every appropriate division must cede its authority and resources relative to asbestos to the program represented by Earl Parker and Reis and McCallie; otherwise the program should be disbanded. The conflict between Bob Hutcheson and Earl Parker or between Denis Kelleher and Jim Reis is as demoralizing as it is counterproductive. For the program to be effective, Parker, Reis and McCallie must have authority, especially since whatever policy is established it is bound to have an unfavorable effect on some division. Coupled with authority must be resources, and I believe an asbestos "war chest" of not less than $250,000 should be immediately identified. Although we are facing a slumping economy, recent debacles such as that between Advertising and Bob Hutcheson must be precluded. Shortsightedness is as great a threat to J-M as juries are.

Finally, if the decision has been made that asbestos has no future, then key personnel in the Corporation must know that this is the case. We can then spend our time preparing an orderly phase out. Also, if the asbestos program is disbanded, then I want to lay first claim on Jim Reis and move him into HS&E. He would be a superb replacement for Edmund Penner, Director of Environmental Services, who retires at the end of this year.

Personally, I feel the situation can yet be salvaged. I would be pleased to supply a list of specific suggestions if you wish to discuss alternatives.

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