General Headquarters
May 14, 1952

To all Plant Managers

Industrial Hygiene

Diatomaceous Earth

Recent research and medical studies indicate that there is a potential health hazard in the use of Diatomaceous Earth under conditions of prolonged exposure at high concentrations.

Accordingly, bagged products from Lompoc are being labelled with a caution notice:

a. On containers holding natural uncalcined products --

CAUTION

"Celite" materials consist of an almost pure, amorphous diatomaceous silica. Inhalation of silica dust over long periods may be harmful. The material should be used so as not to create dust or -- if this is not possible -- employees should be equipped with adequate protective devices.

b. On containers of calcined products --

CAUTION

"Celite" materials, derived from diatomaceous earth, are almost pure silica -- partly amorphous and partly crystalline. Inhalation of silica dust over long periods may be harmful. The material should be used so as not to create dust or -- if this is not possible -- employees should be equipped with adequate protective devices.

Review should be made of our methods of handling the Celite products, and the following is recommended as standard practice for warehousing and handling the various Celite powders:

1. Bag handling procedures should be modified to minimize bag breakage.

Bags should be placed rather than thrown. Piles should have corner guards to prevent warehouse truck damage. If palletized, bags should be within pallet borders, not overhanging.

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2. Spillage or accumulated dust should be vacuum-cleaned immediately.

Sweeping is not satisfactory as it merely disperses the dust into the air, as does truck or foot traffic. Commercial, portable, industrial vacuum cleaners are available.

3. Respirators, having the U. S. Bureau of Mines approval for pneumoconiosis dust, should be worn when handling bags, particularly in confined areas.

While we do not yet know what concentrations of the diatomaceous earth dust may be harmful, experience indicates that respiratory protection should be used in confined areas such as encountered in carloading.

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