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December 3, 1964

Mr. E. W. Redd
Leed Insulator Corporation
7831-7933 E. Pico Blvd.
Los Angeles 21, California

Dear Mr. Redd:

I have noted your correspondence with Dr. Johnstone and it is a pleasure to offer you my views on the subject of asbestosis.

We all are aware that recently there was a considerable amount of unnecessary publicity concerning the asbestos fiber in various news media. The basic study of two groups of insulation workers, using all types of insulating materials in many different ways, was made some time ago. This same report has been used on numerous occasions in various publications and at different meetings.

I do not believe that the so-called facts which were reported are basically correct. In the first place, the men examined were called "asbestos workers" because they belonged to the Asbestos Workers Union. It was inferred that all these men were exposed to asbestos fiber and that, therefore, many of their ills were associated with the fiber. We all know that this is not correct. The report ignored the fact that the men examined were exposed to many other potentially toxic materials and simply blamed everything on the asbestos fiber.

It is extremely unfortunate that this report was given such publicity and that many people became unduly apprehensive. I personally do not believe that there is a serious health hazard associated with the use of asbestos. I have worked in most phases of the asbestos industry for over 30 years and have seen no indication that an extensive health hazard exists. I have observed over 2000 employees in our large asbestos mine and mill for over 30 years, where we are producing over a half million tons of fiber per year and we have no lung cancer or other serious health problems. It is my belief that when reasonable precautions are taken in the handling of the fiber and satisfactory working conditions are maintained, no health problem will exist.

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I was pleased to note in your letter to Dr. Johnstone that you are among the more enlightened employers who install exhaust ventilating systems to provide a healthy working atmosphere. I also noted that you provide dust masks for your employees. I would like to suggest that you make sure these masks are the type approved by the U.S. Bureau of Mines for pneumoconiosis-producing dusts. I am sure that with proper housekeeping methods and continued vigilance, you will have no health problems.

If there is any way in which I can be of further help, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Very truly yours,

Kenneth W. Smith, M.D.
Medical Director

cc: Dr. E. T. Johnstone

bcc: J. C. Malone, Los Angeles
H. M. Ball

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