January 28, 1944.

Mr. E. P. Burlew,
Factory Manager,
Continental Can Company, Inc.,
P.O.Box No. 1930,
Stockton, California.

Dear Sir:

Your letter of January 18th, concerning difficulties encountered by your workmen in handling Stonefelt, has been referred to the undersigned for answer.

Stonefelt is composed of rock wool fibres held together with a binder. We are familiar with the type of complaint that has come to your attention and have noted that it occurs most often during hot summer months when men are working under conditions which cause them to perspire freely. As a rule the irritation or rash is developed only by employees who have never handled the material before.

It is our experience that an immunity speedily develops and that they are no longer bothered after a week or two of exposure. The degree of irritation is in ratio to the sensitivity of the skin of the particular employee. An occasional instance of hypersensitivity- or allergy - has been observed during the 40 years we have been manufacturing this material but these are exceedingly rare.

Rock Wool fibres when examined microscopically are revealed as slender spicules. When particles of this material are rubbed against the skin they will have an irritating effect which, however, will be a physical or mechanical, rather than a chemical, reaction. Experiments conducted for us some time ago by the Harvard School of Public Health conclusively determined that our rock wool contained nothing of a toxic or poisonous character.

For this reason and for the further reason that workers speedily become immunized, it has been unnecessary to develop any detailed formula for prevention. However, goggles can be used to keep the materials from the eyes, and the irritating effects of initial exposure can be minimized if you will suggest that employees wear long sleeves at all times and keep their collars snug around their throats. Their ankles may be protected by tying the trouser legs close to prevent the material from coming in contact with the skin. A good suit of overalls would be the best garment. A shower bath at the end of the work day will also help remove any particles which might adhere to the skin. Where a rash develops, the men should be cautioned against scratching too vigorously, since this may lead to a secondary infection.

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Very truly yours,

Vandiver Brown,
Engineer.

cc Mr. W. H. Allison

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