Johns-Manville

Internal Correspondence

To H. B. Moreno - 3-03

Date June 10, 1977

From W. B. Reitze - 1-06

Copies P. Rolin, M.D. - 1-06
W. Paul, M. D. - Asbestos

Subject VISIT TO ALMERIA, MEISA AND ASBESTOS DE MEXICO

As can be seen from the attached, Almeria and MEISA have a number of problems which must be corrected as soon as possible. I do not view the solution to any of these problems as difficult. I do, however, believe that they must be corrected if we are to maintain a healthy workplace.

I view the situation at Asbestos de Mexico as grave. We have some 900 to 1200 employees at considerable risk. Environmental control efforts, as well as housekeeping efforts, at the very best must be considered rudimentary. In most cases there are no such programs at Asbestos de Mexico. I realize that we are a minority stockholder (40%) and that we do not have the operating responsibility for Asbestos de Mexico; however, I believe that our continued participation in this venture, without insisting upon a general overall cleanup is immoral, if not criminal. With our past knowledge of environmental conditions as they relate to health drawn from our domestic activities, plus the fact that the Mexican Social Security Administration informed us that almost one-third of our population has asbestos-related disease, we cannot plead ignorance.

In spite of the above strong language which describes the plant as it is, I feel that with effort on all our parts, that is, International; Health, Safety and Environment; and above all the Mexican representatives, we can bring Asbestos de Mexico up to J-M standards. It most certainly will take a lot of work on all our parts, but if we are unwilling to spend that time, effort and money to do this, then we should consider giving up the operation. I might add that to give up an operation of this size and potential would not be in our best interests. Therefore, my strong recommendation would be to begin a massive educational campaign followed by appropriate expenditures at the plant to clean up.

Please feel free to call upon HS&E and myself for any phase of the cleanup.

W. B. Reitze

Hank
Dave Tabor
recommends that you
... well on the lines to
... planning the 1114/66
... 1105 will

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VISIT TO MEXICAN OPERATIONS--MEISA, ALMERIA, AND ASBESTOS DE MEXICO

MEISA

On Monday, June 6, I met with Carlos Montoto and Sergio Gomez Chavez. We discussed the MEISA operation in detail and toured the operation. There are a number of areas that need attention. Carlos Montoto is well aware of all the areas that need attention, but I will enumerate them for the record.

We have quite a few asbestos braiders braiding both chrysotile and crocidolite that have no dust control equipment connected with the operation. Some of the twisting is done with the yarns in a moistened condition, which does tend to reduce the dust. Some consideration should be given to equipping the braiding operation with dust control equipment or other dust suppressant methods to supplement the wet twisting.

The asbestos feeding operation for the service sheet line appears to be in need of additional hooding. At present there appears to be insufficient air to contain the dust. It is difficult to determine whether this is all due to the operation's hooding or whether the bayhouse is of insufficient capacity to handle the load.

In the mill board line, the asbestos charging operation at the beater is not hooded or vented, and one would have to surmise that this produces the same conditions that were produced at Manville and Waukegan before control devices were installed. The hand-operated trim saw in mill board has insufficient ventilation to control the dust.

Generally speaking, environmental conditions in the plant, as viewed from visual inspection, indicate that while there are a number of problems in addition to the above, the problems are not of major magnitude and should not take a great amount of funds to correct.

MEISA participates in the required government physical examination program, which consists of bringing a physician to the plant twice a year to conduct a rather cursory medical examination which includes inspection of the eyes, ears, teeth, a stethoscope examination of the chest, and a check to see if all major limbs are present. This examination does not include any chest X-rays nor pulmonary function testing. If any adverse effects are uncovered with this casual examination, Social Security may be requested to bring the trailer to the plant site and take the small 6" by 6" (TB) X-rays. This has not been done at MEISA.

My recommendations would be as follows:

1. An immediate assessment of what the costs would be to correct at least the above-mentioned dusty spots and that work should commence as soon as possible thereafter.

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MEISA (continued)

2. I will arrange for an industrial hygiene survey to be completed within the next three months. This would include the monitoring of the asbestos stations, the noise, the solvent levels, and any other potentially troublesome areas. This industrial hygiene survey will accomplish several things. We will be able to identify further potentially troublesome areas, so that the men are protected and we do not spend any money for corrective actions needlessly.

3. Since the current physical examination program is totally inadequate, I would recommend that a physician be selected and the employees possessing the greatest longevity be given this examination. It is my understanding that there are seven persons who were hired prior to 1964 and the balance of the total 30 hourly people were hired after 1970. Considering the small number of people involved, this should not pose an expensive venture. Regardless of the expense, we must be aware of what our actual health picture is at this location. As soon as Bill Paul, our new Corporate Medical Director, comes on board, I will ask that he and Drs. Wright and Ketin meet together to aid in the selection of a physician.

4. Since I am not quite sure that the plant supervisory employees below the level of Carlos Montoto are fully aware of the entire asbestos and health problem, I intend to furnish Carlos with brochures and other material so that he can begin talks with supervisory personnel to make them aware of the asbestos and health problem.

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Almeria

On Wednesday, June 8, accompanied by Carlos Montoto, I visited the UC mine and mill and met with Rigoberto Gonzales. The mining operation appears to have few problems. Because of the high moisture content at present, dust during the scraping and loading operations appears to be minimal. A dust problem does exist when the scrap from the mill is returned to the mine as waste.

The mill operation presents a few problems, the greatest of which is the stack emissions. The plant manager informed me that ever two tons of fines go out the stack every day. The plume from the plant is visible for many miles and creates not only a problem for the surrounding village, but also an in-plant workplace problem. We are under fire by the Mexican government to correct this problem of stack emissions. I believe that this should be done as soon as possible. This correction will certainly lessen the in-plant condition, but other steps must be taken to reduce worker exposure to free crystalline silica. The packer stations expose the workers to considerable amount of visible dust, and the many leaks in the material conveying systems also contribute to the workplace burden.

Here again, our plant meets the requirements of the Mexican government Social Security Administration in that all employees are given an examination twice a year, and the book is kept indicating that the employees are "apt" and "not apt". In addition, at Almeria the Social Security Administration comes in once a year with their trailer and takes the small 6" by 6" X-rays. On top of this, a program was instituted at the mine several years ago where the employees are sent into Guadalajara to a clinic and the fullsize chest X-rays are taken and evaluated by a radiologist. The plant informed me that to date only one individual has been identified as having pneumoconiosis. It is also my understanding in talking to the plant that the man is well aware of his condition. The plant manager selected the larger X-rays of most of the older workers at the plant and I brought these back with me. Dr. Wright is currently evaluating these films. This should give us a better idea of where we stand regarding the health picture of our Almeria employees.

During our visit, we witnessed the unloading of a boxcar of opened asbestos fiber which is to be used in the Fibra-Flo blending operation. The condition of the car, regarding broken bags and loose asbestos, was one of the poorest I have witnessed in many years. It could not be determined immediately where the shipment came from, whether it was old stock from the Lompoc closeout or whether the material was shipped from the Fresno fiber opening contractor, but in any case, it arrived in poor condition. The facts are being checked and an answer will be forthcoming. The actual site where the Fibra-Flo is blended was inspected, and this operation is totally unacceptable. As it now exists, a man must climb up a 10-foot ladder with the asbestos sack on his head, rest it on the narrow edge of a mixer and shake the contents into the mixer. It then goes to a bagging station with totally inadequate ventilation. It would be my recommendation that this station not be used any more until such time as the planned new equipment is installed. (It was my understanding that we were discontinuing the manufacture and sale of Fibra-Flo in our foreign markets. I am not sure whether this is

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Almeria (continued)

a reversal in policy, and I would very much like to be aware of any such reversal.)

My recommendations would be as follows:

1. That the correction of the stack emissions be accomplished as soon as the work can be accomplished, and certainly by the end of the next fiscal year. It is my understanding that the two tons per day now going up the stack is a marketable commodity and could be used to at least offset the operational costs of the new dust control equipment.

2. I will arrange for an industrial hygiene survey to be made within the next three months so that we may determine with greater accuracy the exposure of our workers.

3. Depending upon the review of X-rays by Dr. Wright, I will request Dr. Bill Paul to follow up on the medical program.

4. Some consideration must be given to a central vacuuming system at Almeria. This would improve housekeeping tremendously and also reduce the overall dust burden in the plant. I would also recommend that some consideration be given to an air wash system for the bags, so that when they are shipped out the generous coating of dust that now goes with them could be removed.

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Asbestos de Mexico

On the morning of Tuesday, June 7, I visited the Asbestos de Mexico operation and met with Francisco (Poncho) Aviles, Plant Manager, and Francisco Glennie, Employee Relations Manager. My guide on the plant tour was Poncho Aviles. Environmentally, this plant is among the worst I have visited, and apparently is similar to the descriptions and photographs that I have reviewed of some of our own operations in the States 25 or 30 years ago. There is a large population--about 800 hourly workers and some 400 office or supervisory workers--so that we have at risk approximately 900 people. The charging stations in the AC pipe line have totally inadequate or nonexisting dust control equipment. The same can be said of the flat or corrugated board lines. While most of the asbestos used in production is chrysotile Calaveras CA, a considerable amount of crocidolite and amosite is used.

There are pipe lathes and millers in the finishing department without any dust control equipment at all. Visibly, the dust at the charging stations and the finishing line is very apparent. In a number of cases, the raw fiber on the floor is to the shoe top level. The storage areas contain many broken bags of asbestos and no attempt is made to repair the bags or in any way contain the fiber. In one storage warehouse, an area approximately 20' by 30' contained a pile of blue fiber from broken bags approximately 4' high. In order to use this fiber in the mixing operations, it is necessary for men to use scoop shovels and sacks to rebag it. Plant cleanup is accomplished by brooms. The scrap grinding operation has intolerable amounts of dust and noise, and used bag handling is done in the most casual way. In several cases piles of paper and plastic bags 10' to 15' high were noticed. Workers then gather these bags, bundle and sell them. The housekeeping program appears to be rudimentary, if at all in existence.

Waste water from the AC pipe operations is discharged into a low lying area which must be retrenched and cleaned out at frequent intervals. This cleanout is done by an outside contractor. I witnessed 10 individuals with shovels digging in the trenches and throwing the dusty asbestos waste from the dried sludge ponds up into large heaps. It is very apparent that the plant management is totally unaware of the asbestos and health problem.

The large silica grinding operation produces vast quantities of dust as well as noise. Poncho Aviles pointed out to me that their equipment is totally inadequate to accomplish the task that it is being used for. Mr. Aviles also indicated that a contract has been awarded to Western Control Engineering for a complete evaluation of the environmental needs of the operation.

In my conversations with Francisco Glennie, he indicated to me that the Mexican Social Security Administration has passed the word to him that approximately 30% of the hourly employees have some asbestos-related disease. He further expressed a desire for information which could be used in their recently established

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Asbestos de Mexico (continued)

training department. He has hired a safety engineer to assist him, as well as a man to train both new employees as well as update the older men.

Throughout the plant respirators were very much in evidence. All that I saw appeared to be brand new respirators that could not have been out of the box for more than a few hours before I arrived on the scene.

Mr. Glennie also informed me that a physical examination program is in the initial stages of development. This would supplement the required government examination which, for our purposes, appears to be practically worthless.

Mr. Ricardo Cabrera called me while he was in Mr. Glennie's office and chatted briefly about the environmental problems, and much later in the evening I had a chance to briefly meet with Mr. Cabrera at the motel in Guadalajara. At this meeting he informed me that he will be in Denver for the next four or five weeks.

Recommendations:

1. Since I feel a big part of the problem is due to an almost complete lack of understanding of the asbestos and health problem among the top management at Asbestos de Mexico, my first recommendation would be to meet with them personally and furnish them with any and all available materials we have that would aid them in updating their plant management on the hazards of asbestos. The initial session might well be held when Ricardo Cabrera visits us later in the month.

2. Mr. Cabrera also informed me that by the end of June he should have in his hand a copy of the report from the consulting firm which would outline all the steps that would be necessary to make the plant environmentally safe. If it is not possible to accomplish all of these programs at once, we might well be able to discuss with Mr. Cabrera some priority classification.

3. Immediate steps must be taken to improve the housekeeping at Asbestos de Mexico. Vacuum systems should be installed, regular maintenance of baghouses should be undertaken, instruction should be given in work practices that do not create unusually large amounts of dust. An upgrading of the housekeeping program could well provide a 30% or more reduction in the existing horrendous conditions at the plant.

4. An immediate follow-up on their projected medical surveillance program should be undertaken and as soon as the program is off the ground, a visit by Dr. Bill Paul would be in order to assess the program and further clarify the 30% occupational disease report from the Mexican Social Security Administration.

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