PLAINTIFF'S EXHIBIT

UC-3663

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Organization Resources Counselors, Inc.

Memorandum

September 27, 1982

TO: ORC Occupational Safety and Health Group
ORC Asbestos Task Force

FROM: Darrell K. Mattheis

SUBJECT: New Safety Limits for Asbestos

Recently ORC received a copy of a news release from the Health & Safety Executive of the British Health and Safety Commission concerning tighter future limits for exposure to asbestos. The Commission makes the point that their new limits are not "absolutely safe levels", for it is as yet not clear that a "safe" level of exposure exists.

Attached for your information is a copy of the news release discussed above. It is to be noted that the English have recommended a three level approach to controlling exposure to asbestos. One reason that this is feasible is the generally accepted premise that Britain has little if any crocidolite. The U.S., on the other hand, has used a considerable amount of crocidolite in the past; and it continues to be used in varying amounts today.

Darrell K. Mattheis

DKM/sel

Attachment

UCC 008618

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News Release

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27 August 1982

New Safety Limits for Asbestos

The Health and Safety Commission is to introduce much tighter control limits for Asbestos from 1 January 1983. Work is to be undertaken to identify what further measures can be taken.

At its meeting on 24 August the Commission decided that the limit for asbestos in general use (chrysotile or white asbestos) should be halved to 1 f/ml. The limit for amosite (brown asbestos) will be quartered to 0.5 f/ml and the strict control limit for crocidolite (blue asbestos) will be maintained at its current level of 0.2 f/ml which effectively rules out its use.

Although a great many workplaces are keeping exposure below 1 f/ml (chrysotile) a significant number are not yet doing so. If they cannot introduce practical engineering controls to meet the new limit by 1 January 1983 the work force will be required to wear suitable protective equipment.

The Commission emphasises that these control limits are not absolutely safe levels. They noted that assertions had been made that there was new medical evidence about the effects of exposure to asbestos. They therefore decided that a detailed review of all the medical evidence to date should be undertaken by an internationally recognised authority in this field.

In the short term they have asked the Deputy Director General of the Health and Safety Executive (Dr Duncan) to bring together a group of medical experts to consider whether there had been any substantial changes to medical knowledge since the Advisory Committee on Asbestos prepared its report.

The Commission also decided to set up a Working Group including both sides of industry, chaired by a senior officer of the Health and Safety Executive, with the object of identifying and recommending any further measures for the control of exposure to asbestos dust that were not considered practicable at the time of the ACA report. This would include a review of present engineering controls and systems of work. A review will also be commissioned to assess the adequacy and the problems of wearing suitable respiratory protective equipment and protective clothing.

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The Commission will consider the reports of the Working Groups not later than August 1983 when they will take into account Recommendation 10 of the ACA Final Report which states "we recommend that legislation should be prepared making clear that an over-riding requirement to reduce exposure to asbestos dust to the minimum that is reasonably practicable should be applied". The Working Groups will have considered the implications for industry of the new limit from 1 January 1983. If the reports indicate that further action needs to be taken on the question of control limits, the Commission will then consider how this should be done.

The Commission has already decided, at its meeting on 20 July 1982, action to deal with a number of hazards on asbestos. These are:

(1) The licensing of asbestos insulation contractors (considered by the ACA to be a group at greatest risk).

(2) The prohibition of spraying of asbestos.

(3) The prohibition of the use of asbestos in insulation.

(4) The prohibition of the import, use and marketing of crocidolite and products containing it.

In addition, an Approved Code of Practice and Guidance Note on "Work with asbestos insulation and asbestos coating" was published and came into effect in October 1981.

Since 1980 efforts have been made to achieve common standards in the European Community on the marketing and use of asbestos products and the protection of the workers in the asbestos industry. Progress has not been as fast as would have been wished. Nevertheless, the possibility of some agreement is in sight. In view of this the Commission decided on the present action.

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The Commission is equally concerned about the public exposure to the hazards of asbestos. However, most measurements of asbestos levels outside the workplace are already considerably below the new control limits. As the Advisory Committee said referring to the public health risk, "We conclude that the presence of chrysotile containing small quantities of amphiboles is unlikely to have produced any material increase in the risk of lung cancer in the general population or any appreciable number of cases of mesothelioma. The same is certainly true of asbestosis".

The Commission will use its powers to ensure that exposure limits generally remain well below the new limit and never exceed it.

Notes to Editors:

1. The new control limits will implement Recommendations 14, 15 and 17 of the Final Report of the Advisory Committee on Asbestos.

2. The existing control limits are based on guidance that was issued following the bringing into effect of the Asbestos Regulations 1969.

3. The Advisory Committee on Asbestos was set up in May 1976. Its first two reports, dealing with thermal and acoustic insulation and methods of measuring airborne asbestos, were published in June 1979. The Final Report of the ACA was published in October 1979 and the HSC asked for comments. During the consultation period two EC draft Directives on asbestos were published. The first, dealing with marketing and use, was published in March 1980 and the second, on the protection of workers, in October 1980. At its meeting on 17 February 1981 the HSC considered comments received on the ACA's Final Report. It also had to take into account the proposed EC Directives and the need to co-ordinate UK and European action on asbestos. The HSC advised the Secretary of State for Employment on 7 April 1981 on the basis on which an attempt should be made to reach an agreement in the European Community.

4. The proposed regulations on licensing and prohibition follow the HSC's consideration of responses to the Consultative Document on the "Asbestos Insulation and Coating Draft Regulations", intended to implement Recommedations 1, 2, 3 and 5 of the ACA's First Report, published in June 1981.

5. A statement by the Chairman of the Commission, Mr Bill Simpson, has been issued today as Press Release C 19 : 82.

C 18 : 82

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