ENVIRONMENTAL FACTS

Johns-Manville

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ASBESTOS AND HEALTH

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WHAT IS ASBESTOS?

Asbestos is the generic name for a variety of fibrous minerals. Of the four commercially significant varieties, chrysotile accounts for about 95% of the asbestos usage in the United States. The world's three leading producers of chrysotile asbestos are Canada, the U.S.S.R. and South Africa. Of the five million tons mined in the world each year, the U.S.S.R. is the principal producer and user, Canada is the largest exporter, and the U.S.A. is the chief importer. Canada accounts for 38% – 1.9 million tons – of annual world asbestos production, injecting about a quarter billion dollars into Canada's economy.

WHO USES ASBESTOS?

Virtually everyone. Asbestos is used in some 3,000 different products worldwide each day. You cannot operate a road or rail vehicle, a ship or aircraft without it. It goes into brake linings, roofing products, sewage systems, floor tile, electrical insulations, fireproof partitioning, the exteriors of buildings, firefighting clothing, lubricants and caulking materials, rockets and space vehicles, acoustical tile as well as steam, gas-turbine and rocket engines. Many skyscrapers sit on lead and asbestos pillows. Potable water flows through asbestos-cement pressure pipes. Asbestos goes into prefabricated buildings, ships at sea, subway trains, aircraft and submarines. It has literally scores of essential applications in the office, the plant, the home, the apartment, and plays an important role in our everyday lives.

WHAT MAKES ASBESTOS ESSENTIAL?

Asbestos fibers are unique. When they are combined with other materials – and asbestos is rarely used by itself – they provide protection from fire, absorption of heat from friction, insulation from heat, cold and noise, reinforcement for plastic and other materials, particularly cement, or any combination of these. And they do all this at remarkably low cost.

IS ASBESTOS A MAJOR AIR POLLUTANT?

No. Dust counts taken in urban areas show that asbestos levels in community air are many times lower than levels considered by the Federal Government to be safe for occupational exposure. In addition, evidence indicates that small quantities of asbestos fiber from natural sources probably existed in the ambient air for thousands or even millions of years, so that man evolved to his present form in an environment containing asbestos.

DOES THE USE OF ASBESTOS PRESENT A HEALTH RISK TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC?

No. In a report following a 1972 meeting of the International Agency for Research on Cancer–which is a division of the World Health Organization–the Advisory Committee on Asbestos Cancers reported there is no evidence at the present time of any lung damage by asbestos to the general public. In addition, the Committee emphasized there is no evidence to indicate any health risk to the public from asbestos fibers present in water, beverages and food.

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IS THERE ANY HAZARD FROM DRINKING WATER THAT HAS PASSED THROUGH ASBESTOS–CEMENT PIPE?

The available evidence does not indicate any risk. Studies have been made by the U.S. Government and various industry groups. The American Water Works Association has completed a comprehensive study and concluded that no firm evidence shows that the proper use of asbestos-cement pipe poses a hazard to health by reason of ingestion of asbestos fibers. Calculations comparing the probable ingestion exposure in occupational groups to that likely to occur as a result of ingestion of potable water from asbestos-cement pipe systems suggests that the probability of risk to health from the use of such systems is small – approaching zero. In these investigations, the amount of fiber released into potable water supplies was infinitely small and was not considered to be any hazard to health. It should be noted that asbestos fibers occur naturally in most source waters in the U.S., however, studies on Asbestos-Cement pipe have shown a minimal release of fibers into water.

ONCE ASBESTOS IS INHALED, DOES ALL OF IT REMAIN IN THE LUNGS?

No. The lung's normal cleansing mechanisms quickly remove the majority of inhaled particles.

TO WHAT EXTENT IS ASBESTOS AN OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH HAZARD?

Because of the long latent period of asbestos-related disease, some cases still are developing among long-term employees whose exposure began at a time when not enough was known about the health effects of prolonged and excessive inhalation of asbestos dust, and when the dust control technology in use was not as advanced as it is today. With our present medical knowledge and improvements in dust control, we have been able to dramatically reduce exposure levels. If we vigorously continue this effort there is every reason to believe that these cases will decrease in the future and that asbestos-related disease will be controllable in the occupational environment.

CAN ASBESTOS BE SAFELY USED IN INDUSTRIAL WORKPLACES?

Yes. Asbestos fiber can be handled and used on the job safely as long as certain basic precautionary measures are followed. These include wet processing whenever possible, careful handling of fiber bags to prevent tearing and spilling, the use of adequate dust control exhaust hoods at all stages of in-plant handling where dust is unavoidably created, the wearing of respiratory protective equipment where necessary, and good housekeeping with regard to dust clean-up and disposal procedures.

WHAT IS INDUSTRY DOING TO PROTECT ITS WORKERS?

In the late 1920's the asbestos industry sponsored some of the first medical studies of asbestos-related disease ever undertaken in the United States. These studies provided information that became the basis for dust control programs in the industry, programs which have been improved and expanded over the years. Many millions of dollars in sophisticated and efficient equipment

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and techniques have been devoted to reducing the inhalation of asbestos dust by workers in the mining and milling of asbestos and in the manufacture of asbestos-containing products.

Through the Institute of Occupational and Environmental Health in Montreal, selected universities and hospitals in cooperation with the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health, National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences and other Government agencies, J-M and others in the industry are sponsoring or cooperating in major epidemiological and other research projects designed to identify and eliminate asbestos-related health risks within the industry as well as for fabricators and applicators of finished products containing asbestos.

IN VIEW OF THE CONCERN OVER THE POTENTIAL HEALTH HAZARDS OF ASBESTOS, HAS THE COMPANY SOUGHT TO CURTAIL EXPANSION IN ITS ASBESTOS BUSINESS?

No. We believe that asbestos plays an important role in our modern technological society and that the material can be handled safely when certain basic precautions are followed. As an indication of our confidence in this belief, we just recently finished spending $75 million to expand mining and milling facilities at our Jeffrey Mine in Asbestos, Quebec. Even this expenditure has not yet enabled us to keep up with the demands of all our customers.

WHAT IS THE JOHNS-MANVILLE POSITION ON OSHA REGULATIONS?

The J-M position is one of compliance and we will have achieved the two-fiber standard in accordance with the official standards set by authorized Government agencies.

HAVE THE OSHA REGULATIONS HAD AN EFFECT ON J-M SALES AND EARNINGS?

No. The OSHA regulations have not had any material effect on J-M sales and earnings and we don't expect any in the future.

DO YOU EXPECT ANY CHANGE IN THE OSHA REGULATIONS ON ASBESTOS?

Aside from lowering the standard from five fibers per cc to two fibers per cc in July, 1976, any other change in the standard is purely speculative at this time. We do know that OSHA plans to revise the asbestos standard soon and a greater emphasis will be placed on work practices to control employee exposures to asbestos. Along these lines, J-M and the industry has been cooperating with OSHA in evaluating the present standards and suggesting changes. In fact, the industry in response to OSHA has submitted proposed work practices in the summer of 1974.

DOES THE COMPANY EXPECT ANY PROBLEMS COMPLYING WITH OSHA REGULATIONS?

Environmental control programs developed and implemented in recent years will enable J-M to comply with OSHA asbestos regulations through diligence, vigor and commitment. More than 75% of our U.S. manufacturing operations using asbestos already are within the two-fiber limit which is scheduled to go into effect in 1976.

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WHAT IS J-M'S REACTION TO CONTINUING REPORTS OF WORKERS SUFFERING FROM ASBESTOS-RELATED DISEASE?

As we have pointed out before, the disease being seen today among some long-time employees of the asbestos industry is not an indication of present-day conditions. Rather, these cases are the result of past conditions when higher asbestos dust levels were present due to the general lack of knowledge on the part of the medical/scientific community, government, labor and industry alike of the possible health effects from excessive exposure to asbestos dust. While we expect we may continue to see cases of asbestos-related disease among workers whose exposure began many years ago when dust control technology was not as effective as it is today, we have every reason to believe that the present and planned dust control procedures will result in an end to asbestos-related occupational disease.

WHAT PROGRAMS DOES JOHNS-MANVILLE HAVE UNDERWAY TO CONTROL THE HEALTH HAZARDS OF ASBESTOS?

Over the past decade we have spent more than $20 million in the United States alone in our continuing efforts to make our asbestos manufacturing operations completely safe for our employees. Furthermore, we are sponsoring, in cooperation with the industry, medical research at a number of highly regarded institutions around the world on the health effects of asbestos. We also are working closely with OSHA and the Environmental Protection Agency in their efforts to control asbestos emissions in the workplace and in community air. J-M is fully committed to continuing future improvement in dust controls.

WILL ASBESTOS-CEMENT PIPE BE BANNED DUE TO PRESSURE BY ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH GROUPS?

At the present time we have no reason to believe that the use or manufacture of asbestos-cement pipe will be banned. One environmental interest group did seek such a ban by the EPA, but that agency's response to the request was that there was no basis for such action based on present medical evidence. There is no medical evidence to show that drinking water that passes through A/C pipe poses any health problem. Further, the unique properties of asbestos-cement pipe make it ideal, in most circumstances, for potable water supplies and waste water discharge. In addition, J-M and the industry have been cooperating in the development and implementation of studies by the American Water Works Association Research Foundation and various Government groups to define any health hazard that might as associated with A/C pipe, and to this date, no health problem is indicated in any of the studies.

SUMMARY OF INFORMATION ON ASBESTOS & HEALTH

Asbestos and health continues to be a subject of public discussion. We know that asbestos–like many other materials–can be harmful if not used properly. Still, much of what has been said and written about this unique material and its association with occupational and environmental health has been inaccurate and distorted.

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While it sometimes appears that the media and some environmental groups have been unable to place the asbestos/health issue in its proper prospective, it is becoming quite obvious that the commercial consumer has been able to do just that. Early in 1973, J-M already had sold all the asbestos it was able to produce that year – a record 681,000 tons. We've just finished spending some $75 million to expand mining and milling facilities at our Jeffrey mine in Quebec, Canada, to meet this growing demand and to assure us of an annual asbestos yield in excess of 600,000 tons for the next 40 years. We are not overlooking the asbestos/health issue. On the contrary. As a leading world producer Johns-Manville has been a leader in developing safe work practices to protect our employees and those of our customers. Since the first indications there was a health problem associated with exposure to large quantities of asbestos fiber, we have sought through medical and engineering research to eliminate or reduce the hazards. We have spent millions of dollars for equipment to prevent the inhalation of asbestos dust by people in our mines, mills and plants. We recognize the need to do more and are doing so.

Of course, today we have to live with a number of government regulations. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration demands that asbestos workers not be exposed to more than 5 fibers per cubic centimeter of air, and will reduce that standard to 2 fibers per cc on July 1, 1976. We are aware that OSHA plans to review and restructure the asbestos standards, and we expect a greater emphasis to be placed on safer health work practices – something we have been doing for years. OSHA has asked industry to assist in writing these proposed work practices, and one of our own people is Chairman of the Standards and Technical Committee of the Asbestos Information Association which has been asked by the government to assist in this area. We are continuing to work with government just as we did with studies that led to adoption of the occupational health standards in 1972 for all U.S. manufacturing operations using asbestos. Over the years we have spent millions in independent and cooperative research programs designed to learn more about the effects of asbestos on human health, and we continue to do so. Presently, about a dozen research projects are underway or were recently completed with our support. In addition, we allocated about $5.5 million in 1973 just for environmental control projects.

Also in 1974, J-M formed The Department of Health, Safety and Environment with the delegated responsibility to develop a Corporation-wide program to ensure the health and safety of management and employees of Johns-Manville and to ensure effective environmental quality through the recommendation and implementation of appropriate controls. These objectives are achieved through programs in several major areas of responsibility: Health; (occupational health, medical affairs and care, health education and biostatistics and epidemiology), Environmental Safety and Quality; (employee safety and workmen's compensation), Internal Environmental Monitoring; technical affairs and interchange, product information, consumer education and government liaison; and External Environmental Relations.

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In the past year, our people have talked with some 800 asbestos customers, passing on to them the knowledge and expertise we have gained in solving asbestos-related health problems and showing them how they could do the same. Material handling guides have been made available to firms using asbestos in their operations. We have held numerous meetings with government regulatory and standard-setting agencies to assure their exposure to the widest field of knowledge or environmental control and industrial hygiene techniques.

When we come to a discussion of asbestos and health, all of us at J-M can proudly state that we have nothing to hide and have worked hard to find answeres to the problems we have helped to identify. We know how to get the job done so that asbestos still can be used for the benefit of man without creating a health problem for him.

We know how to solve and are well along toward solving the problems in our own operations, but we know that is not enough. We will continue to work with our customers and others to ensure the maximum possible protection to man and his environment.

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