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MEMORANDUM TO: Business Agents
Insulation Contractors

FROM: Tabershaw-Cooper Associates

SUBJECT: Respirators

We are sending you the best information available to us regarding masks for those working with asbestos since new emergency standards for asbestos require masks under certain circumstances. We delayed making specific recommendations on respirators up to now because of the many uncertainties regarding government standards for asbestos, pending changes in Bureau of Mines approval schedules, and new developments in single-use masks.

Except for certain tear-out operations, most excessive exposure to asbestos in the insulating trade requires the use of either a reusable or single use respirator.

SINGLE USE RESPIRATORS

(1) American Optical Company's Dust Demon (BM-21B-107) (with valve).

(2) Safeline Products' No. 5340 Disposable Dust Mist Respirator (BM-21B-108), similar to the AO above. (with valve)

(3) Welsh Model 7165 single use disposable respirator (BM-21B-109).

(4) Minnesota Mining and Manufacturing Co.'s Model 8710 (not Model 8500). (without valve).

The choice of masks depends upon comfort to the wearer, relative interference with vision, and the length of time required to build up resistance to breathing. At this time, we recommend the Welsh Model No. 7165 as the most acceptable, but this may change as other models are developed or modified.

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Workers must be instructed in proper fit and care of masks which must be kept clean and not allowed to accumulate dust. Regulations will require that new ones be used daily, and they may have to be disposed of sooner if breathing resistance builds up.

CERTIFIED REUSABLE RESPIRATORS

Certified reusable respirators acceptable for use against asbestos can be recognized by a number that includes the figures BM-21B. There are a large number of these on the market, but the most appropriate for the insulating trade are the half-face type, covering only the mouth and nose. Among those found convenient and acceptable are (1) MSA Dustfoe #66, (2) Welsh Model 7100 (with filter 7100-7), and (3) Willson #560, (4) American Optical Company's R-2090.

Individual workers should have an opportunity to try more than one type to determine the best fit. Regulations require that their use be accompanied by a respirator program which includes instruction and training in use, tests for fit, provision for maintenance, cleaning, disinfection, and repair. The cost of the latter must be considered when deciding between reusable and single use respirators.

NON-BUREAU OF MINES APPROVED MASKS

Cheaper and less effective respirators are acceptable when exposures are limited to fibrous glass. For this purpose a throwaway type like the 3M #8500 may be useful for reducing irritation of the nose and throat.

Although this letter is primarily concerned with respirators, we wish to stress that prevention of high concentrations of dust in the air by ventilation, enclosure, wet techniques, better work habits, and good housekeeping are far more important in reducing exposures. They should ultimately make the wearing of respirators unnecessary in most situations.

We are preparing to review installations throughout the area during coming weeks to determine the current use of asbestos and define which operations will require change or use of respirators. In the meantime, in case of doubt a respirator should be used. We will continue to keep you advised of future developments and will be glad to respond to inquiries regarding sources of supply and instructional programs.

Sincerely,

TABERSHAW-COOPER ASSOCIATES

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