Johns-Manville

Internal Correspondence

To: See list below

Date: October 25, 1973

From: W. B. Reitze, Denver GHQ

Copies: See attached list

Subject: OSHA LETTER NO. 22

NIOSH ASBESTOS BOOKLET

The attached booklet entitled, "Caution, Asbestos Dust is Hazardous to Your Health...", is being offered free to anyone who requests it from NIOSH. We have not chosen to circulate this publication to our employees for two principal reasons: 1) It contains several inaccuracies, and 2) there are many instances of over-emphasis of minor points. We strongly suspect that all the labor unions that are involved with asbestos handling people will circulate this booklet very widely.

In the event that this booklet does reach the employees in your plant, and they begin to question certain sections, listed below are some comments on those sections we feel are either inaccurate or over-emphasized.

Page 5. "Mesothelioma." One might get the impression that asbestos is the sole cause of Mesothelioma. This is not true. There are many cases of Mesothelioma on record where the individual had no exposure to asbestos.

Page 6. "Maintenance Workers." The cartoon may give one the impression that a major source of asbestos exposure is found in brake repair shops. There may be some asbestos found in a brake repair shop, but it is not a major source of asbestos fiber release.

Page 6. "Family and Friends of Asbestos Workers." Here the impression is that significant quantities of asbestos dust are carried into the home affecting the man's wife and family. This is not true. Because extensive dust collection systems have been installed in most of our plants, only insignificant amounts of dust are carried away when the employee leaves work.

Page 7. "Asbestos Pollution Affects Everyone." Both the cartoon and the wording give one the impresion that the general population is in grave danger because they are breathing large quantities of asbestos. This statement is absolutely false. There is some asbestos fiber in ambient air all over the world. How much is put into the air by man's use of the product and how much is put into the air by nature has not been determined. The authors have conveniently omitted the fact that there are large quantities of asbestos put into the air by natural weathering of asbestos-containing rocks. This natural weathering of rocks is probably responsible for low levels of asbestos fiber being present in ambient air for thousands of years.

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Page 10. "Personal Safety Equipment." The wording may lead persons to believe that all employees who handle asbestos fiber or asbestos-containing products must be furnished with protective clothing. This is not so. The federal regulations clearly state that protective clothing is not necessary unless the fiber levels exceed the published limits, which in this case is 5 F/cc.

Page 10. "On-the-Job Housekeeping." The same implication that the employer is required to furnish protective clothing is given in this section. This is not true.

Page 11. "Physical Exam and Testing." The federal regulations clearly spell out that physical examinations for people who handle asbestos or asbestos-containing products not locked-in must be given on an annual basis. If an employee feels that he is in need of more medical examinations, he is free to obtain them at his own cost.

Page 11. "Statistics Show." The statement that thousands of workers may die from asbestos-related causes should be put in the proper perspective. Yes, the prospect does exist that some people will die from asbestos-related causes. It must be noted that those cases of asbestos diseases that we are seeing today are the result of high exposures that took place probably 20 to 30 years ago and is not related to exposure levels found in our plants today.

Page 13. "Some Things Employers Must Do." Here we think it is well to point out to our employees that not only are we doing everything that is required of us by federal law, but we have been performing these safeguards for many years--before the advent of the federal OSHA regulations.

The above remarks have not been prepared as a rebuttal to the booklet. However, if the employee should raise questions or the union should formally request information, then this explanation might prove useful.

To: W. R. Goodwin
F. H. May
All Senior Officers
All Division General Managers
All Production Managers
All Group Plant Managers
All Plant and Mine Managers
All Employee Relations Managers
All Contract Unit Managers
All Office Service Managers

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