

MSD work delayed

Goodrich finds vinyl chloride in sewer

By HOWARD FINEMAN

Courier-Journal staff writer

The D. F. Goodrich Chemical Co. has found "low concentrations" of vinyl chloride and another of its plastics-related chemicals in noxious fumes that have been delaying sewer work near the company's Bell's Lane plant.

Metropolitan Sewer District (MSD) executive director John J. Wilburn said yesterday that the fumes were discovered July 22. He said two employees of an MSD contractor became nauseated while opening a buried industrial sewer at Bell's Lane and 41st Street.

Both Wilburn and MSD engineers

Thomas J. McBride said they were certain the fumes that affected the workers were not methane "sewer gas" normally encountered in MSD repair work.

MSD attorney Robert W. Keats said Goodrich "has been put on notice that it is violating MSD rules."

Wilburn said an MSD regulation prohibits users from emptying a "noxious or malodorous gas" — or any substance that could chemically create such a gas — into a sewer.

According to Wilburn, the presence of what he described as "white clouds" of fumes in the 27-foot high sewer has been "sporadic but recurring."

The large industrial "southwestern out-

fall sewer" empties into the Ohio River north of Schenks Lang in southwestern Jefferson County.

The Goodrich plant is located "downstream" from the MSD contractor's work site, but Wilburn said that opening the sewer had created "a chimney effect" that draws the gas back toward the workers.

Goodrich plant manager P.H. Lawrence said that the company has "done some analysis" of the fumes, finding "low concentrations" of vinyl chloride and acrylates.

Acrylates result from the manufacture of several heavily used industrial plastics, according to Eugene Plock, research

chemical engineer at the University of Louisville's Speed Scientific School.

At least six former workers at the Bell's Lane plant are known to have died of a liver cancer traced to heavy vinyl chloride exposure in working places years ago.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is considering whether to add vinyl chloride to its list of regulated air pollutants.

Plock said the effects of acrylates are under investigation nationally and that he did not know if their presence in the

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fumes could have caused the nausea and dizziness experienced by the sewer workers. Lawrence said that Goodrich discovered the presence of the fumes "about the same time" the sewer workers found them.

He said the EPA had examined and not objected to the presence of the two substances in the plant's waste water emptied into the sewer.

The EPA regional office in Atlanta could not be reached last night for comment.

Lawrence said that the vinyl chloride in the fumes could have no other source than Goodrich. But he said the acrylates could have come from other industrial users of the sewer as well as Goodrich.

He said the company's tests were aimed only at seeing if chemicals present at the plant were in the fumes.

The rest of the contents of the fumes and the frequency with which the fumes appear are undetermined, he said.

It is possible, Lawrence said, that at times the fumes noticed by the workers contain no substances from the Goodrich plant.

Exhaust fan being used

When the fumes were first discovered, Wilburn said, Goodrich provided gas masks and other safety equipment for the sewer workers.

Both Wilburn and Lawrence said that Goodrich since has been working to prevent any fumes from reaching the work site.

Goodrich now is using a large exhaust fan to pump any fumes out of the sewer through a large manhole located at the plant, Wilburn and Lawrence said.

Robert T. Offutt, secretary-treasurer of the Louisville-Jefferson County Air Pollution Control Board, said last night that an Air Board chemical engineer will inspect the Goodrich fume exhaust arrangement today.

The MSD board decided at its regular meeting yesterday to seek more information about the presence of the fumes and the exact length of work delays caused by them.

The contractor, Munich Engineering Corp. of Jeffersonville, Ind., has asked MSD for permission to stop work at the site until about June 1975.

MSD officials said the original completion date is February 1975.

The delay has been requested, Wilburn said, both because of the fumes and because of what is now expected to be late delivery of three "shut-off gates" to be used in ensuring normal sewage flow during high water on the Ohio River.

Wilburn said that under EPA and state orders MSD is installing the gates on the sewer to prevent high water from backing up and disrupting the operation of the Southwestern Pumping Station.

Wilburn said that any delays to date had been solely because of the fumes.

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WILLIE TUESDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 1, 1974

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October 1, 1974

Louisville and Jefferson County
Metropolitan Sewer District

400 South Sixth Street
Louisville, Kentucky 40203

502 597 0591

MSD

September 26, 1974

Mr. Phillip H. Lawrence
Plant Manager
B. F. Goodrich Chemical Company
P. O. Box 954
Louisville, Kentucky 40201

Re: Morris Forman Wastewater Treatment
Plant Secondary Treatment and Sludge
Disposal Facilities, Sluice Gate
Chamber, Southwestern Pumping Station,
Contract No. 508-D

Dear Mr. Lawrence:

Please take notice that MSD is claiming damages against B. F. Goodrich Chemical Company as a result of B. F. Goodrich, its agents or assigns, allowing harmful fumes to enter the Southwestern Outfall Sewer causing interference with the contractual obligations between MSD and Munich Engineering Company in construction under the above subject project.

The presence of harmful fumes in the sewer which have been identified as vinyl chloride, butadiene, chloroform and other unidentified gases, was first noted by Munich Engineering Company on or about July 22, 1974, said gases being present virtually every day in varying amounts causing delay in construction. The presence of said fumes are in violation of MSD's Industrial Waste Surcharge and Industrial Waste Regulations. Under Section 4(E) of Appendix B "no person shall discharge, or cause to be discharged, to any public sewer, drain, stream or natural outlet under the control of MSD, any noxious or malodorous gas or substance, which either singly or by intersection with other wastes, is

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MSD

Mr. Phillip H. Lawrence
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capable of creating a public nuisance or hazard to life of or preventing entry into sewers for their maintenance and repair."

I understand that B. F. Goodrich has been placed on notice by MSD and Munich Engineering Company regarding this dangerous condition and, after your meeting with MSD representatives on July 25, 1974, that attempts have been made by B. F. Goodrich Company to remedy the situation. However, any attempts by B. F. Goodrich Company to reduce the presence of harmful fumes in the sewer have proven fruitless.

I would appreciate your informing me of any findings you may have regarding this matter and any proposal you may have for the immediate elimination of harmful fumes from the Southwestern Outfall Sewer. I suggest that you turn this matter over to your insurance carrier, inasmuch as MSD and Munich Engineering Company are intent upon having the party liable for interference with its construction contract compensate them for the loss in construction time and costs they have incurred.

If anyone from B. F. Goodrich Company or your insurance carrier would require any further assistance regarding this matter, please have them call me at (502) 587-0591 and I will be glad to provide them with

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any additional information which is required. I also request, however, that anyone from B. F. Goodrich Chemical Company or your insurance carrier refrain from questioning any MSD employees in regard to this claim unless I am present.

Very truly yours,

Robert W. Keats
Legal Counsel

RWK/psg

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