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MOUNT SINAI SCHOOL OF MEDICINE
of The City University of New York
FIFTH AVENUE AND 100TH STREET · NEW YORK, N.Y. 10029

Department of Community Medicine

July 23, 1970

Dr. Merle Bundy
Medical Director, Industrial Medicine
United States Steel Corporation
525 William Penn Avenue
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15230

Dear Merle:

I've been curious about the increased lung cancer mortality among your coke oven workmen, as demonstrated by Lloyd. The question of benzpyrene has, in our opinion, been inadequately established, especially in view of our failure to find, at least so far, an increased lung cancer rate among our roofing workers exposed to rather high concentrations of benzpyrene in the air about their work.

I have a possible alternate explanation which could be looked at. In general, coking ovens are associated with a good deal of insulation. Insulation = asbestos. Very often, too, the men on the job either do their own repairs or are in the vicinity of repair work if done by other trades. Sometimes the clean-up is less than meticulous with much asbestos allowed to remain as waste.

A hypothesis equally tenable, then, might be that the increased lung cancer is due to asbestos inhalation.* Of course, all of this depends upon the actual insulation conditions, of which I know very little. What are the facts?

With warm regards.

Sincerely yours,

Irving J. Selikoff, M.D.
Professor

* Much more readily controlled.
I've also spoken to Bill Lloyd, and mentioned this suggestion of mine to him.

USEI000115

United States Steel Corporation
525 William Penn Place
Pittsburgh, Pa. 15230

COPY OF LETTER

August 7, 1970

Irving J. Selikoff, M.D., Professor
Department of Community Medicine
Mount Sinai School of Medicine
of The City University of New York
Fifth Avenue and 100th Street
New York, New York 10029

Dear Irving:

Thanks very much for your calling our attention to a potential explanation of our coke oven problem. My first inclination was to suggest that there was no appreciable asbestos used. However, I find there is a fairly amount of asbestos rope that is used as piping around pipe as they emerge from the furnace and that there are asbestos gaskets that are used on some of the lids attached to these pipes. This obviously gives us another avenue to pursue, and I will keep you informed of our efforts to identify the agent responsible.

I am bringing your letter to the attention of our Medical Committee and will ask that they likewise check in their companies. I appreciate very much your having brought this to our attention.

With kind personal regards.

Sincerely,

MB/rp