

HPF-400

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RR 11/13/74

Honorable Ken Hechler
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Hechler:

This is in reply to your request of November 19 for comment on a letter from Mr. John P. Tribe, Charleston, West Virginia, concerning asbestos in talc.

The Food and Drug Administration is aware of reports that asbestos in talc has been implicated as a cancer-causing agent and has been actively evaluating the evidence to determine what, if any, limitations should be placed upon the use of talc in the commodities we regulate, namely, foods, drugs, and cosmetics.

Laboratory studies appear to indicate that the inhalation of asbestos fibers, especially in high concentrations over long periods of time, and the parenteral administration of asbestos fibers may result in the development of cancer; however, it appears the evidence concerning the possible hazard from ingestion of asbestos fibers is contradictory and inconclusive. A list of references covering these studies was published in the Federal Register on September 28, 1973. We are enclosing a copy of this Federal Register announcement for Mr. Tribe's information.

In this same issue of the Federal Register regulations were proposed concerning the use of talc in drugs and foods. The preamble to these regulations discusses the complexities involved in regulating the use of talc in drugs and foods, including the development of a method of detecting asbestos in talc, which may be of interest to Mr. Tribe. We are currently evaluating the comments received concerning these proposed regulations. Final regulations will be published in the Federal Register as soon as the evaluation is completed.

To date we have not published a proposed regulation concerning the use of talc in cosmetics, including cosmetic talcum powder. We do not currently know at what levels the presence of asbestos fibers in cosmetics,

when used as directed or when used under conditions which are customary or usual would present a hazard to health. Further, accurate methods have not yet been developed for detecting and measuring the presence of the various types of asbestos fibers in cosmetics at the low levels at which they are expected to be present. We are currently working on these problems and when they are resolved we intend to publish a proposed regulation relating to asbestos fibers in cosmetics.

If we can be of further assistance, please let us know.

Sincerely yours,

Robert C. Wetherell, Jr., Director
Office of Legislative Services

Enclosure
Repr FR 9/28/73

cc: Congressional Liaison Office
