

INDUSTRIAL HYGIENE DIGEST
Literature and News

NEWS ITEMS

- 97 The Soap and Detergent Association Survey Highlights Need For Employee Cleanliness Program in Industry.

According to questionnaires completed and returned by 69 industrial medical directors representing 220,000 workers in about 100 plants in 1964, skin health hazards are present in almost every form of industrial endeavor. Principal causes of skin irritations included plastics and synthetic resins—55%. (Within this group, and of greater concern because of the hazards involved, 82% are handling epoxy resins); solvents and lubricants—77%; acids—75%; alkalies and cements—75%; greases and lubricants—67%; and cutting and cooling oils—58%. Others, potentially harmful to the skin, in regular use are: biologic agents—5%; chromates and chromic acid—40%; cleaning compounds—68%; coal tar products—33%; dyes and dye intermediates—26%; furs and hides—2%; metals and metal plating—34%; paints and varnishes—56%; plants and woods—7%; rubber and its compounds—26%; and vegetable oils, fats and waxes—34%. Manufacturers of chemicals and allied products constituted the largest single industry whose plants were surveyed. Every one of the companies surveyed provide their employees with hand washing products. Some make available two, three and even four different types for efficient removal of all kinds of soil. Employees are cooperating with employers to keep skin troubles out of their plants—only seven of the medical directors felt that the wash-up facilities provided were insufficiently utilized by production workers. Speakers and visual aids on plant and personal hygiene are available according to the organization which made the survey: The Soap and Detergent Association, Industrial Division, 295 Madison Avenue, New York, N. Y. 10

- 98 Asbestos-Dust Deaths Rising in PHS Study.

Exposure to high levels of asbestos dust 20 to 30 years ago was probably responsible for a 21% increase in the death rate among certain workers in a large group recently studied by the U. S. Public Health Service. This excess mortality—in the asbestos textile industry—was due to cancer of the lung and gastrointestinal tract and to asbestosis. The report was presented to experts on environmental disease attending a Conference on Asbestos Research sponsored by occupational health officials of the Public Health Service in Cincinnati. "While dust levels have been sharply reduced in the asbestos textile industry, the finding adds to the growing evidence that asbestos exposure is associated with cancer of the lung," said Dr. Murray C. Brown, chief of the Division of Occupational Health. Dr. Brown's report was based on research being conducted by Dr. Philip Enterline, of McGill University, and Dr. Mildred Kendrick, of the Division.

-- Medical News 1, 3 (Jan. 2, 1967)

- 99 Fluorides May be Useful in Preventing Atherosclerosis and Osteoporosis.

Fluorides in drinking water may help to prevent hardening of the arteries and to reduce osteoporosis, Dr. Mark Hegsted of the Harvard School of Public Health told the annual meeting of the American Dietetic Association at the Sheraton Boston Hotel. He was reporting on a study of 1,000 North Dakota residents over 45 years of age. Three hundred lived in an area with high natural fluoride content in the water, the remaining 700 in a low fluoride area. All had x-rays of their spines and, incidentally, of their aortas, during an investigation of osteoporosis, calcium loss in the bone. It was the x-rays of the aortas, primarily an after thought, that disclosed there were far fewer cases of calcium deposit in the people from the high fluoride areas. Calcification of arteries, often present in the last stages of atherosclerosis, is commonly a precursor of arteriosclerosis or hardening of the arteries. Assuming that the North Dakota findings can be confirmed, Dr. Hegsted said, the data indicated that somehow fluoride helps to keep the calcium in the bone and prevent its deposition in the blood vessels, where it does not belong. In the high fluoride areas there was substantially less osteoporosis, whether judged from the relative bone density or from the presence or absence of collapsed vertebrae. In low fluoride areas, reduced bone density was very prevalent in older women, reaching 85% in those 65 or over, much higher than in men in the same area. In the high fluoride area the difference between the sexes was less, suggesting that fluoride is markedly effective in women but relatively unimportant in men. Further investigation is needed to determine how much fluoride should be added to drinking water to prevent osteoporosis.

-- Conn. Health Bull. 80, 302 (Dec. 1966)

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