P72

ASBESTOS TEXTILE INSTITUTE

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18 January 1965

Mr. J. T. Griffis
H. K. Porter Co., Inc.
Thermoid Division
Charlotte, N. C.

Gentlemen:

I am attaching an article which was written and appeared in "The Plain Dealer", January 12, 1965 in Cleveland, Ohio. We have already received several inquiries on this report from customers.

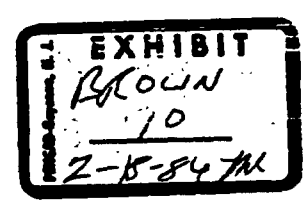
Although this lists various occupations having significantly high lung cancer mortality rates, it certainly is alarming as far as our industry is concerned.

I think that this article should be the subject of some conversation in our Board of Governors meeting in February.

Very truly yours,

JOHN A. BROWN, JR. - PRESIDENT

msg





Cancer Experts Eye Asbestos in Alarm

By JOSEPHINE ROBERTSON

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Asbestos, used in more than 3,000 American products from textiles to insulation and flooring, has recently become a subject of international concern as a cause of cancer.

ONE IN A SERIES

Inhalation of asbestos dust was said to be a rapidly growing health problem in the world's industrial countries, at a three-day international conference on the "biological hazards of asbestos" sponsored in New York by the New York Academy of Sciences.

The United States uses more of the world's annual production of 3,055,000 short tons than any other nation. For this reason a number of American scientists at the conference indicated that a thorough study of the asbestos-cancer problem was needed here in order to define it so solutions could be sought logically.

Satisfactory information concerning the occurrence of sickness and death among American asbestos workers was said to be largely lacking or unavailable.

THREE NEW YORK researchers were able to study a small segment of the asbestos-cancer problem through cooperation of the New York and New Jersey locals of the International Association of Heat and Frost Insulators and Asbestos Workers.

These researchers were Dr. Irving J. Selikoff, Dr. Jacob Churg and Dr. E. Cuyler Hammond.

Dr. Hammond is director of statistical research of the American Cancer Society.

They investigated 307 consecutive deaths of persons who were union members from Dec. 31, 1942, and Dec. 31, 1962. Of the 307 deaths it was found that 124 were from cancer and 17 from asbestosis, a disease from inhalation of asbestos dust. These causes accounted for about 45% of the deaths.

The cancers were: lung carcinoma, 53; digestive tract carcinoma, 35; mesothelioma, a recently described asbestos-related cancer arising from linings of the chest and abdominal wall cavities, 9, and other cancers, 27.

The New York doctors con-

Continued on Page 5, Col. 1

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Cancer Experts Eye Asbestos Perils

★ From First Page

cluded the lung cancers, the mesotheliomas and probably 34 of the digestive tract cancers appeared to be "significant complications of asbestos inhalation.

IN THE UNITED STATES, one in six deaths from all causes is from cancer. Among the asbestos insulation workers studied, more than one in three deaths was from cancer.

From such circumstantial evidence the need for protection of such workers from inhalation of asbestos becomes clear.

These workers represent only one small sampling of the thousands who are exposed to asbestos. They were said to be "primarily engaged in construction work in which they have relatively light intermittent exposure to asbestos-containing insulation materials."

They did not include "non-union, maintenance or sprayed insulation workers, or those who do insulation work as members of other unions, such as longshoremen, ship builders, oil-burner and boiler repairmen, railroad, sheetmetal workers, laborers and others in various trades."

There is almost no information about the effects of asbestos products on American consumers and those incidentally exposed to it.

SOME RESEARCHERS from foreign countries reported development of cancer in wives of asbestos workers, who washed their husbands' clothes, in dry cleaners who handled such clothes, in people living in the neighborhood of asbestos factories or along the route by which asbestos was hauled.

The asbestos industry is only one of many believed to involve increased cancer hazards to workers and the public, that are being handled inadequately or not at all.

"Over half of the industrial plants in this country lack basic industrial hygiene control measures. The most serious deficiency is in the provision of adequate preventive measures in small plants of less than 500 employes, which accounts for two thirds of the (national) work force."

The above statement is from the report of a committee formed at the request of Surgeon General Luther L. Terry to develop a program to improve environmental health. The committee, headed by Dr. Paul M. Gross, professor of chemistry, Duke University, spent a year on the assignment.

One of the committee's recommendations will be carried out with the establishment of a national center for environmental sciences "for an enhanced and major national effort in environmental health." The center will cost more than $25 million. It will be situated on a 400-acre tract in South Carolina in the Raleigh-Durham-Chapel Hill area, it was announced last week.

IT IS BELIEVED that scarcely the surface has been scratched in uncovering American occupational disease hazards. During the past year an analysis of lung cancer mortality by occupation in the entire United States, has revealed 11 occupations with significantly high mortality rates from lung disease. This was reported recently by Dr. Robert J. Anderson, chief of the Bureau of State Services of the U.S. Public Health Service.

Workmen listed as having significantly high lung cancer mortality rates were: blacksmiths, forgemen, hammermen, carpenters, auto mechanics and repairmen, metal molders, construction painters, paperhangers and glaziers, plumbers and pipefitters, stationary engineers, tailors and furriers, tinsmiths, coppersmiths and sheet metal workers, operatives in primary metal industries and elevator operators.

An occupational health section in the report by Dr. Gross' committee concluded: "There is a widening gap between the new materials being created and an understanding of their effects on living systems . . . The industrial worker is first exposed to the chemicals that find their way into home use.

"Industry is the incubator for problems of more far-reaching consequence and alert, scientifically sound and unbiased investigations of occupational health problems can provide bases for later community-wide investigations."

Next: The Personal Smog.