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# Vinyl Chloride Limits Criticized

By TIM O'BRIEN
Washington Post

WASHINGTON — The American plastics industry has warned that proposed government rules to slash vinyl chloride levels in factories to minimize the danger of cancer could cost the nation up to 2.2 million jobs and $90 billion in annual production.

Anton Vittone, president of B.F. Goodrich Chemical Co. and an official of the Society of the Plasics Industry, said the proposed health rules could virtually shut down his industry.

Vittone appeared at a public hearing with scores of other industry representatives to oppose implementation of new regulations, which would limit factory air levels of vinyl chloride to less than one part per million — so small as to be undetectable.

Meanwhile spokesmen for two Painesville Twp. plants involved in the production of plastics have also warned that enforcements of "zero" standards would put them out of business.

The two plants are Uniroyal Inc., 720 Fairport-Nursery Rd., and Robintech Inc., 786 Hardy Rd.

Both plants have been involved in government studies to determine whether any of their employes may be in danger from exposure to vinyl and polyvinyl at the plants.

So far no workers have shown any signs of the disease and both plants have initiated more stringent safety regulations to protect workers.

In recent months, vinyl chloride — a key chemical in the manufacture of many plastics — has been linked to a rare form of cancer called angiosarcoma of the liver. The evidence has been rapidly accumulating.

Within the past two weeks, testified Dr. Marcus M. Key of the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, "we have identified two deaths from angiosacoma of the liver in men employed at plants utilizing polyvinyl chloride to fabricate other products."

Key said seven cases have been reported at a B.F. Goodrich plant in Kentucky, three cases at a Goodyear plant in New York, two cases in a Union Carbide plant in West Virginia and one case in a Firestone plant in Pennsylvania. Of the thirteen reported cancer cases linked to vinyl chloride, only three victims remain alive, he said.

In addition, experimental studies conducted by Industrial Bio-Test Laboratories of Northbrook, Ill., and by Prof. Cesáre Maltoni of Bologna, Italy, have strengthened the belief that vinyl chloride causes cancer.

In a just released telegram to John Stender, head of the Occupational Safety Health Administration in the Department of Labor, Maltoni reported that vinyl chloride produced "zymbal gland carcinomas, nephroblastomas, angiosarcomas of liver and other sites, skin carcinomas and probably hepatomas and neuroblastomas" in rats.

In another experiment, Maltoni said, more than 60 mice were exposed to 50 parts-per-million of vinyl chloride for seven months. After 49 weeks of dosage, he said, "we have observed nine mammary carcinomas, two liver fibro-angiomas, and two subcutaneous angiomas."

Based on the Maltoni and Bio-Test Laboratory experiments, plus the known cases of liver cancers in humans exposed to vinyl chloride, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration concluded that "our present judgment is that vinyl chloride is a carcinogenic agent."

In April, the agency issued an emergency standard limiting vinyl chloride air levels to 50 parts-per-million — the same daily dosage administered to Maltoni's mice. Now the agency proposes to reduce allowable vinyl chloride air levels to less than one part per million, the so-called "no detectable level" standard.

A key objection from the plastics and chemical industry is the feasibility of meeting the "no detectable level" standard.

"Such a commitment cannot be accomplished overnight since, in certain areas, the technology for accomplishing it is, as yet, not developed, and when developed, facilities must be installed requiring time for engineering, procurement and installation," Vittone said.

Ralph L. Harding, Jr., president of the plastics association, said the companies "are sincerely concerned with providing all appropriate and necessary safeguards.

They have already achieved substantial improvement in their operations...Nobody has to remind them of their responsibilities to their fellow workers."

The plastics association cited a study by the Arthur D. Little company of Cambridge, Mass.: "An immediate shutdown of all polyvinyl chloride resin plants in the United States and the subsequent unavailability of PVC resin could result in a loss of 1.7 to 2.2 million jobs in consuming and related industries and a loss of domestic production value of $65 to 190 billion annually."

Vinyl chloride goes into the manufacture of such diverse products as sporting goods, packages, phonograph records, electric insulation, floor tiles, clothing and paints.

While fewer than 7,000 American workers are directly involved in making vinyl chloride and turning it into polyvinyl chloride, scientists suspect that hundreds of thousands of associated workers may be exposed to the danger. Dr. Irving J. Selikoff, who was instrumental in linking asbestos to cancer, said "the hazard might not stop at the factory gate but...might invade workers' homes and the neighborhoods about vinyl chloride-polyvinyl facilities, (and) that transport and storage might present unsuspected risks."

Earle F. Webster, representing five companies that use the chemical to produce conveyor belts, warned of a "serious economic disaster" in the event the rule is implemented. He urged the Occupational Safety and Health Administration to "temper your decision."

A Labor Department environmental impact statement disputed the industry prediction of massive economic dislocations. While noting that some marginal firms may be affected, the report said there is no evidence that the health rules will eliminate the production or use of vinyl chloride.

And the AFL-CIO called the industry's economic warning a form of blackmail, charging that the chemical companies have ignored "overwhelming medical evidence" about the vinyl chloride danger.

United Rubber workers President Peter Bommarito said the AFL-CIO supports the "no detectable level" standard, even at risk of losing some jobs.

The plastics industry is proposing exposure standards that become gradually tougher over time, but which would still remain more lenient than the government's "no detectable level" requirement. The public hearings resume today at the Labor Department.

## In the Public Interest

**Ralph Nader**

WASHINGTON — Leadfree gasoline will bee needed for catalyst-equipped 1975 automobiles soon to reach the market. These latest pollution control devices are supposed to permit an average 10 per cent better fuel economy than 1974 cars. Also, the Environmental Protection Agency estimates that such leadfree fuel will save motorists $45 per year in maintenance costs.

All these relative savings sound promising until one looks at what the Federal Energy Administration (FEA) may try to pull off in deciding at what price leadfree gas will be sold at the pump.

UNTIL EARLY this month, leadfree gas was selling at an average of four cents per gallon over regular, compliments of the industry - indentured FEA. There was no opportunity for public comment. But with a major leadfree gas market of 1975 cars on the horizon, the FEA cranked up its decision - making process. It gave the public just ten days in June to comment on a permanent premium pricing policy for leadfree gasoline beginning July 1, 1974. The stakes for 1975 car buyers are several hundred millions of dollars.

Our Public Interest Research Group and Consumers Union submitted the consumer's case in a June 10, 1974 letter to FEA chief, John Sawhill. Three studies were cited to show that there was no justification for allowing leadfree gas to be priced above regular gas.

One of these studies, an Arthur D. Little, Inc. analysis for the Environmental Protection Agency, concluded that "through 1976 there is no net economic penalty (cents per gallon)." To translate, that means the oil industry can produce leadfree gas for the same price as leaded gas at equal octane.

In recent years, motorists have complained to us about the price differences between the two types of gasoline. When leaded gas came along many years ago, the price went up. Now, the oil companies want to charge the same price as for premium for taking the lead out of gaoloine.

Consumers can appreciate why the multibillion dollar corporations are fighting to keep the Senate from approving an effective consumer protection bill this month after taking note of the following passage from the aforementioned letter to Mr. Sawhill:

**The Federal Energy Office has not cited a single report or presented a single fact in support of its proposed premium pricing policy for 91 RON lead free gasoline.**

Who fights for the consumer in Washington? Certainly, not the FEA, and it won't be the proposed consumer protection agency if the radical reactionaries such as Senators James Allen, Sam Nunn and William Brock could have their way.

FORTUNATELY, on the leadfree gasoline matter, FEA backed down from its policy of allowing leadfree fuel to be priced at the same level as premium. For the month of July, it announced that leadfree gas could only be sold for an extra one cent over regular. There was no question but that the June 10th letter, with its cited studies, was a decisive factor in turning FEA partially around. If FEA holds to its decision for the coming year, motorists in 1975 cars will save $300 million (the difference between a four cent and a one cent increase.)

But the FEA is merely in a tactical retreat to give the oil industry an opportunity to regroup for a second try. FEA has declared that its one cent pricing decision was good only temporarily. It has issued an invitation for further industry and public comment for another post-July ruling on the permitted price of leadfree gasoline. Oil industry data submitted to the FEA for higher prices can be allowed to stay secret. This means that consumer groups will not be able to analyze and question this self-serving material. And it is not likely that the FEA, its staff swollen with former oil industry officials and like minded former big business personnel, is going to fight against further inflation and further consumer gouging.

In all this struggle over FEA's pricing policy, the public health reasons behind leadfree gas should not be forgotten. Lead in gasoline accounts for 90 per cent of all airborne lead or about 200,000 tons per year. Extensive surveys of urban children, exposed to auto lead emissions, reveal that about 25 per cent of them have blood lead levels at or above the level considered unsafe by the Environmental Protection Agency.

John Sawhill, who recently took over as head of the Federal Energy Administration in Washington, D.C., works everyday in a bureaucratic cocoon surrounded by industry lobbyists. He needs to hear from the people. Write him your complaints and suggestions about gasoline prices and other energy matters. At age 37, he's still young enough to learn.

## Three Students on Dean's List

Three area students have been named to the dean's list at Adrian College in Michigan.

They are Carol Boyer of Euclid, Carol Beall of Mentor and Deborah Laymon of Painesville.



## Crows Chased

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