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A study by the University of Pittsburgh contradicts a University of Massachusetts report that links cancer deaths of Monsanto Co. workers in Springfield to exposure to a material used in making plastics, the company says. PAGE 13

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Monsanto doubts plastics-cancer link

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A continuing study by the University of Pittsburgh contradicts conclusions of a University of Massachusetts study that links cancer deaths of former Monsanto Co. employees in Springfield to exposure to a material used in making plastics, a company spokesman said Monday.

"The results of the Rosenman (UMass) study are not confirmed by the University of Pittsburgh study," according to James Shriver, manager of the Springfield plant.

"The principal difference is that the University of Pittsburgh study shows that those employees who died of digestive cancer were less likely to work for a long period of time with vinyl chloride," Shriver said.

Shriver was commenting on a published report on the deaths of 110 former Monsanto employees that said that 34 were caused by cancer and may have been work related.

The study, headed by former University of Massachusetts professor Dr. Kenneth Rosenman, concentrated on two specific work sites at Monsanto's two Springfield plants and determined that "people who worked there longer, who had a longer latency period, have higher risks of dying of all malignant neoplasms (abnormal tissue growths)."

However, Shriver said Monday

that a continuing study at the University of Pittsburgh "does not confirm" the UMass results.

"The information we have from the (Pittsburgh study) shows this (long exposure to vinyl chloride) is not the case" in cancer-related deaths, he said.

Monsanto has been involved in an ongoing cancer study of the Springfield plant using the Department of Public Health at the University of Pittsburgh for more than four years, Shriver said.

"A detailed report of the University of Pittsburgh study has been made available to the union (representing Monsanto employees) and sent to the appropriate government authorities," he said.

"Monsanto was not consulted on the data used in the UMass study. We are not aware of the details of the analysis. We don't know where the data came from," he said.

Rosenman's study was aided by a group of UMass graduate toxicology students and studied former employees who worked at the Springfield plants between 1948 and 1975 when vinyl chloride was used.

They reportedly made use of seniority documents provided them by Local 288, International Electrical Workers Union, which represents Monsanto employees, to determine which employees worked at which locations in the plants.

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