



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

REGION VI
1201 ELM STREET
DALLAS, TEXAS 75270

PLAINTIFF'S EXHIBIT

CAP-641

October 30, 1980

Marilyn Rife
101 Arcadia Place, #310
San Antonio, TX 78209

Dear Ms. Rife:

Thank you for your letter of October 2, 1980. We share your concern with reports of asbestos in drinking water.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Region 6 office, has been in communication with the Texas Department of Health, the Edwards Underground Water District, and the City Water Board of San Antonio since reports of asbestos in San Antonio's water began. We have also consulted with our own EPA research and health effects laboratories and our technical support division.

Based upon our findings, we do not believe the citizens of San Antonio are subject to any measurable health risk from asbestos in their drinking water.

There are two possible sources of asbestos in San Antonio's water. These are from naturally occurring sources in the ground water, and asbestos fibers from the asbestos-cement water pipe.

In our communications, the Edwards Underground Water District has confirmed that portions of the Edwards Aquifer have asbestos-bearing rock formations which yield small amounts of asbestos to the ground water. Present scientific information does not indicate that these levels represent a significant health risk. However, water samples of the source ground water in the San Antonio municipal water supply do not indicate the presence of asbestos.

The second possible source is asbestos-cement pipe. Asbestos-cement pipe has been widely used throughout the United States for over 40 years. Its advantages are high strength, relative low cost compared to other materials, and resistance to soil corrosion. This high strength results from asbestos fibers mixed in the cement which act as reinforcing agents in the hardened concrete. Despite extensive research, no satisfactory substitute for the asbestos in the compound has been discovered.

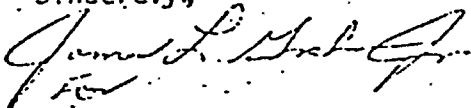
When asbestos-cement pipe is used to transmit highly corrosive waters, deterioration of the concrete can occur, releasing some of the asbestos fibers. Asbestos-cement pipe has been the subject of extensive studies, and these indicate that noncorrosive source waters such as found in San Antonio, do not attack asbestos-cement pipe, and no fibers are released.

San Antonio recently conducted tests to determine if a commonly used method of drilling and tapping for new connections released asbestos particles into the water. Samples taken during this testing confirmed the release of fibers and the method of drilling and tapping has been changed so that these particles are prevented from getting into the water. Subsequent tests show no detectable levels of asbestos in the water.

Because of the acknowledged health problems related to asbestos inhaled and/or ingested by workers in occupational exposure, it is natural for people to extend this concern to other exposures. EPA and the scientific community have felt that extensive study is justified to determine if there is a level at which asbestos in drinking water might represent a measurable risk to public health. No conclusive scientific evidence has yet linked gastrointestinal cancer incidence with ingestion of asbestos through drinking water.

I appreciate your concern for public health protection. Please be assured that we will continue to stay in touch with the agencies involved in maintaining the quality of water in the San Antonio area, and we will advise them of the continuing research findings both in our own agency and the scientific community at large.

Sincerely,



Mac A. Weaver, Acting Chief
Water Supply Branch (6AWS)

cc: C. K. Foster, P.E.
G. H. Scherwitz, Jr., P.E.
Thomas P. Fox
Robert P. Van Dyke ✓
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Washington, D.C. 20460
Water Supply Staff