

7-23-79
K5Nelson

PRESS QUERY

COMPANY (OpUnit or Corporate): MIC

SUBJECT: OCP AND DIOXIN

REPORTER & MEDIA: Larry Morris
KBIA Columbia, MO 882-7591

TIME & DATE: May 22, 1979 - 11:14 a.m.

Roger Jolley
Associated Press
May 22, 1979 - 1:42 p.m.

X J. R. Foehr
X T. L. Gossage
X E. H. Harbison
X E. L. Head
X J. C. McPhillips
X J. S. Metcalf
X J. D. Wilson
X News Bureau
X J. T. Nolan
X J. E. McKee
X D. R. Bishop
— W. J. McCarville
— W. R. Mulhall
X J. F. Hussey-Washington, D.C.
X S. Pickard-Washington, D.C.
X New York Public Relations
— Brussels Public Relations
— MAP PR
X MCI PR (J. Spano)
X MIC PR (G. Young)
— MPR PR
— MTC PR
— INT'L PR

- Q. Have you solved the problem of dioxin contamination of OCP?
- A. As we discussed last week, we've made some changes in our OCP process. Based on one sample analyzed by our lab in Dayton, we could detect no TCDD in the chemical intermediate called OCP.
- Q. Does that mean you are no longer shipping the bad material and now make a pure version? How will you destroy your bad material?
- A. The trace levels of TCDD are no health hazard. We've continued to ship OCP with contamination of TCDD because our customers chlorinated the product further to make PCP; no batches are being destroyed.
- Q. What have you done to the process to clean it up?
- A. Previously we used caustic soda in the distillation process to prevent corrosion of the production equipment. We've been experimenting with using no caustic soda. That's how we got the no-TCDD analysis. We're now trying to see if we can run the process without the caustic.
- Q. You said TCDDs were no health hazard? Why did you clean up your process if the TCDDs are no health hazard?
- A. Reviewed situation from position paper.

(Attached is a recent Chemical Week article on Sturgeon).

Reviewed above with Associated Press.

SOURCE OF ANSWER Jim Wilson

HANDLED BY: R. C. Isham
CO1040

CHEMICAL WEEK
May 23, 1979

top of the news

Dioxin is found in cleanup workers' blood

Two professional cleanup workers who helped mop up a 20,000-gal. spill of orthochlorophenol in Sturgeon, Mo., last January have been found to have low levels of TCDD (2,3,7,8-tetrachlorodibenzo-*para*-dioxin) in their blood, according to the Environmental Protection Agency. The highly toxic dioxin—a contaminant of orthochlorophenol—has so far caused no adverse health effects in the workers.

The orthochlorophenol was en route from Monsanto to a customer on January 10 when the Norfolk & Western tank car carrying it derailed in Sturgeon. "Quite a cloud of obnoxious gas" was released, EPA says, and forced temporary evacuation of most of Sturgeon's 650 residents. Cleanup workers from Western Environmental Services (Portland, Ore.)—hired by the railroad—arrived the same day to contain the orthochlorophenol and eventually remove the contaminated soil from over a mile of trackbed. Although "Western Environmental supplied full protective equipment for all employees," according to N&W, five of the men subsequently tested showed traces of orthochlorophenol in their urine. Monsanto later notified EPA that its orthochlorophenol shipment contained 37 parts per billion of TCDD, although the company said it was not possible to determine whether the dioxin was the highly toxic 2,3,7,8 isomer of TCDD. (EPA's own later analysis of the ortho from several laboratories confirmed the presence of the 2,3,7,8 TCDD isomer, officials report.) The five workers contaminated with orthochlorophenol were then tested for dioxin.

One worker who reportedly disregarded safety procedures and let his hands come in contact with the orthochlorophenol has approximately 31 parts per trillion of 2,3,7,8 TCDD in his blood, EPA says. Another worker has 7 parts per trillion and N&W says it doesn't know how he could have been contaminated. Western Environmental declined comment. Because human dioxin contamination is rarely reported in scientific literature, EPA officials are unsure whether the workers' levels are cause for concern. "We don't know if they're high or low, but I would guess there's no toxicological significance," said Dr. Joseph Balster, an EPA physician, especially because there have been no adverse health effects thus far. But the workers will still be monitored, he added. □