PLAINTIFF'S EXHIBIT
WRG-1087

Libby: Vermiculite increased cancer

LIBBY (AP) — Workers at the largest vermiculite mine in the world here were told Tuesday that a federal study shows previous conditions at the mine more than doubled some employees' risk of dying from lung cancer and other respiratory diseases.

Those findings, from the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, said the incidence of lung problems in current and former mine workers is related directly to the levels of contaminants in the air to which they were exposed.

The open-pit mine, built in 1923 and bought by construction conglomerate W.R. Grace & Co. in 1963, employs about 140 people and is the largest vermiculite producer in the world.

Vermiculite is used in a variety of products — including potting soil, insulation, plaster and some concrete — and is processed at 50 plants throughout the United States and Canada. Vermiculite also contains asbestos fibers.

The results of the study resemble those from an earlier study by McGill University in Montreal.

Part of the McGill study included a sample of 406 men who worked at the Libby mine during the 1940s, '50s and '60s and said there were 24 more deaths than would be expected statistically.

The deaths were caused almost entirely by exposure to asbestos fibers contained in the vermiculite, the McGill study said.

Both studies said gradual improvements in air quality at the mine and mill that began in the late 1960s have dramatically reduced but not eliminated the hazards.

Corbett McDonald, professor of occupational health at McGill University and author of its study, said Tuesday in a telephone interview that current working conditions at the mine are "frankly pretty good."

McDonald's study, which was paid for by W.R. Grace, said under current conditions a full-time employee who works at the mine 50 years incurs a risk of getting lung cancer that is 5.5 more than the national average.

But some current and past employees began work at the mine when conditions were much worse, and the risk of some of them dying from lung cancer is estimated to be 150 percent greater than the national average, he added.

"It is true that ... even for somebody that started in the last five or ten years, the risks are very, very small, but that of course doesn't apply to the older workers. It's important that they realize that," he said.

Mine Manager Bill McCaig said his company began to educate its employees about the health risks and how to reduce them in about 1977. The hazards were not kept secret from workers before, he added.

"As in all things relative to what we do today, we didn't do those types of things," he said of educating workers. "But hell, nobody else did either."

McCaig also said no direct effort has been made to contact former workers to tell them the results of the new studies. Many of the past workers were used in the two studies and probably know of the find-[illegible]

The Daily Inter Lake, Kalispell, Montana, Wednesday, October 2, 1985—A-5

10/15/85

To: JACK WOLTER

KALISPELL PAPER PICKED UP STORY OCT. 2 & I DIDN'T GET COPY UNTIL TODAY. MAROZZO'S MOTHER SENT COPY.

ONLY SUPRISE IS (AP) WHICH WE HAVEN'T SEEN OTHERWISE JUST A REPEAT

NO REACTION LOCALLY

WJMC

~~1) R. Walsh~~ OCT 18 1985

2) Deidre (File)

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