



J. D. Burns

Interoffice Communication

To Robert L. Lembke, M.D.
From Woodrow W. Massad, M.D.
Date August 10, 1972
Subject TRIP REPORT - ABERDEEN AND PITTSBURGH - JUNE 1972

Aberdeen, Mississippi, Conoco Plastic Plant: June 19, 6:30 A.M. - Began drawing 2nd round of blood for lead determinations approximately 3 months after first round (Andy Longoria and I).

I consulted with Marcus Smith about a chest x-ray program dealing with a group of employees. All feel they may have enough exposure to justify a pilot study.

June 19 - We visited a radiologist in Columbus, Mississippi and made arrangements to have him interpret the x-rays. Arrangements have been made at the local hospital to take the x-rays.

Mr. Smith and I also discussed the lead blood studies, AOL x-ray studies, and general safety inspections.

Also, on June 19, meeting with Jerry Powell (Operations Supt. of vinyl reactor plant).

There is an average of 2500 to 3000 vessel reactors entries each month. Within the next year planning increased production will mean 3500-4000 vessel entries. At this time each reactor cleaner enters vessels for 0-8/days.

They are in the process of experimenting with different methods of cleaning reactors, i.e. jet water and chemical cleaning - hopefully, one of these methods will be satisfactory in the production quality material without complication and changes in the chemical structure of the final product. If this is successful, the number of vessel entries will be cut in half. Although either the chemical or jet water cleaning may produce good results, there will continue to be a necessity for vessel entry by the reactor cleaner.

Mr. Powell has made off-the-record inquiries about symptoms of AOL among his reactor cleaners but feels there has been no problem or symptoms referable to AOL.

After discussing this with Marcus Smith and Jerry Powell, it was felt that further investigation of this problem should be made. A hand x-ray program either annually or every other year, depending on the first round x-ray findings, preceded by an education and questionnaire program, would be beneficial.

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Plant Inspection - In a pass-through inspection, a number of units were shut down for cleanup and repairs, i.e. hose, area, hog, line 2 and weighing area. Even when one takes into account the units not operating, there still seemed to be a distinct reduction of visible dust when compared to the last inspection tour of November 1971.

The obvious improvements made since the last inspection (positive direction of employees without confusion, the care taken by fork lift truck drivers, clean-up crews, wearing of hard hats and in most areas, where required, dust masks, safety glasses and ear plugs) gave the impression that we were inspecting a different plant.

It was obvious, however, that a close look at items as we passed through the plant indicated the need for tighter controls and improvements as follows: (1) A better seal on the box and ventilation tube in the hose area which sprays cyclohexanone on hose; (2) Hooded blender on line 3 has no guard door or any facility to insure an employee will not fall into blender; (3) (a must) - Open elevator shaft without any type of guard door or handle to keep employee from accidentally falling into shaft; (4) Very seldom do you see a "no smoking" sign. Signs should be more obvious and in more numbers. (this is very important). (5) (a must) - I saw no signs to mark or identify noisy areas. Signs should be in easy vision when approaching a noise area. (6) The breakfast room is slightly cleaner than previously but some repairs should be made, especially in water fountain area to keep water off floor rather than setting up a Rube Goldberg type catchall. A large sign set up in breakfast room reading, (this is a must), "POSITIVELY WASH HANDS BEFORE EATING OR SMOKING," should be required. (7) Lead weighing area is still being done from open sack to open sack with a hand scoop-- some enclosed design or hooded scale should be installed. (The employee working in the area during inspection had his mask down around his neck.)

Vinyl Building Inspection - Management, controls and safety awareness seems to be much stronger in this area. An inspection of approximately 4-5 open reactors (some having reactor cleaners in them) was almost totally free from odor of vinyl chloride indicating that the time schedule on ventilation has been markedly improved. Because of a previous related unusual accident, the platform of the ladders leading out and down from the second floor of vinyl building should have a heavy wire gauge steel screen securely attached around the platform up to the bottom rung of the safety railing. Also, a safety no-skid rubber or "plastic" perforated floor covering should be placed on the platform and steps leading down the side of this building from the 2nd floor.

In general, I can say that there is marked improvement of the gross violations seen on my last visit. Mr. Marcus Smith states that engineering is being used to work out better designs and suggested improvements on working machinery to continue the reduction of hazards in the plant.

I am greatly encouraged about the improvements already made and hope that the above-listed suggestions will be considered an addition to the improvements to be accomplished in the near future.

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