

12/80 For use By UCC PR STAFF

FACT SHEET ON THE INCIDENCE OF BRAIN TUMORS AMONG
EMPLOYEES AT UNION CARBIDE'S TEXAS CITY CHEMICAL PLANT

Recent press reports emanating from a conference sponsored by the New York Academy of Sciences October 27-29, 1980, have focused on the incidence of brain tumors among employees at Union Carbide's petrochemical plant in Texas City, Texas.

Dr. Victor Alexander of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration has been cited as the source of a statement that the 18 deaths (17 according to NIOSH) from brain tumors among close to 9,000 employees at Texas City over the past 39 years represents "a four to five fold excess over expected levels (of brain tumor incidence) calculated from using data from cancer rates in Galveston County."

In plain English, this statement implies that Union Carbide employees at Texas City have experienced four to five times the rate of brain tumors as their neighbors in Galveston County.

This statement is untrue. Based on an epidemiological study being conducted by the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) in cooperation with Union Carbide -- a study that will not be completed before the first quarter of 1981 -- the incidence of brain tumors among employees at Texas City appears to be slightly in excess of expected levels, but within the range of "normal" incidence and statistical error.

In plain English, this means that 17 deaths were traced by NIOSH to brain tumors at Texas City. The approximate number of such cases that would have been expected is anywhere from 10 to 27. This range may be further refined as the study progresses.

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It is not possible to date to establish any link between occupational exposure to any chemicals or chemical process at Texas City and increased risk of brain tumors.

According to NIOSH, which has analyzed the epidemiological data produced at Texas City, "So far in the course of this investigation, no convincing association has been found between any historical exposure and the development of brain tumors at this plant."

It is emphatically not the intention of Union Carbide Corporation to sidestep any health or safety issue that may in any way be related to occupation. On the contrary, it is Union Carbide's policy to undertake extensive epidemiological studies at any of its facilities where there may exist remote concerns about the health and safety of employees, and to contribute to the small but growing body of knowledge about possible environmental or occupational health-risk links. Union Carbide scientists are involved in epidemiological studies currently being conducted at company facilities where long-term data (up to 40 years employment) can be compiled. A company wide surveillance program also monitors the mortality experience of past and present employees in order to detect any work - related excesses, which would trigger extensive study.

Union Carbide's Texas City facility has been in operation since 1941. During this period, approximately 9000 people have worked at the facility for periods ranging from a few weeks to 39 years.

During the first half of 1978, the company's Gulf Coast medical director proposed to plant management that an epidemiological study be conducted at Texas City. Similar studies were being conducted at other Union

Carbide chemical facilities, and it was felt that since Texas City was then 37 years old and had employed thousands of workers, such a study would provide valuable information for Union Carbide's total occupational health program.

Initial discussions were held with a prominent medical consulting group with a view toward designing an epidemiological study. During this period, an employee at Texas City who was diagnosed by his physician as having a brain tumor reported that he suspected an excess in their incidence to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration.

OSHA requested from Union Carbide work history information on any employees known to have died of a primary brain tumor. After reviewing these files, OSHA asked for assistance from NIOSH, the agency responsible for scientific evaluation of any possibly work-related health risks.

In February, 1979, Union Carbide and NIOSH agreed that an epidemiology study at Texas City would be undertaken by NIOSH. Union Carbide agreed to cooperate in the study, and to provide all available health information on past and present employees at Texas City.

A total of 8,851 employee work histories were provided to NIOSH for epidemiological study. Of these 8,851 employees, it has been determined that 18 died of primary brain tumors.

A preliminary review of the work histories of these 18 employees has thus far not revealed any common exposure to a specific chemical or group of chemicals. Length of employment of the 18 employees ranged from 29 days to 35 years. Two of the 18 worked at Texas City for less than 6 weeks. Six worked throughout the plant -- a very large complex and Union Carbide's biggest chemical production facility -- and 12 worked at one or more of 18 different areas of the plant.

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The Texas City plant uses liquefied petroleum gases (LPG) and chemical feedstocks from other Union Carbide plants as raw materials for the refining of ethylene, propylene and acetylene. These major chemical "building blocks" are processed into anti-freeze and intermediates in the production of plastics, films, paints, solvents, aspirin, and skin lotions.

Union Carbide continues to operate the Texas City plant in full compliance with all federal and state environmental and health standards -- as well as the company's own internal standards, which are in many cases more stringent than those imposed by governmental agencies.

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