FILE NAME: DuPont (DUP)

DATE: 1970 Feb 2

DOC#: DUP105

DOCUMENT DESCRIPTION: Memo from James F. Morgan, Consultant, Industrial Hygiene, RE Asbestos Dust Inhalation & Mesothelioma

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February 2, 1970

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ASBESTOS DUST INHALATION

Attached to this letter is a proposal for a Company-wide Conference to discuss the health effects of inhalation of asbestos and the means of measuring and controlling the hazards. This letter is an invitation to you to attend the conference and to arrange for attendance by all persons in your department who have a need to know about these matters.

There are several reasons for arranging this conference at this time.

The following quotation illustrates the concern that exists in industrial medical circles:(1)

> "With the increasing use and indispensability of asbestos minerals, there has come realization of some very real hazards that must be better defined and controlled. Present standards for dust control do not appear adequate to prevent asbestosis over a working lifetime, and many segments of industry aggressively attacking the problem have already been using more rigorous standards. The associations between asbestos minerals and malignancies

(1) Asbestos as a Hazard to Health. Fact and Speculation. W. C. Cooper. Arch. Environmental Health 15, 285-290 (Sept., 1967).

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of the lungs, pleura, and peritoneum have become increasingly convincing. Current efforts must be directed toward better definition of the importance of type, size of fiber and the importance of co-factors."

As you well appreciate, asbestos and asbestos products are widely used within the Du Pont Company. There has been a lack of a unified program for the appraisal of dustiness and for controlling the inhalation of asbestos. Now there is an increased interest on the part of governmental agencies in all aspects of occupational health and safety. Last year new regulations were published under the Walsh-Healey Public Contracts Act and a part of these regulations includes the adoption of the limits for concentration of asbestos dust in the air. In addition to this action there was proposed in Congress, during the last session, that a federal act should regulate the amounts of contaminants that occur in the air in work places. This legislation failed of passage, but undoubtedly will come again before Congress and it is anticipated by persons in the health protection field that there will be federal legislation.

Concerning the widespread use of asbestos in the Du Pont Company, it is a fact that in chemical processing asbestos is almost ubiquitous. It occurs in insulation for vessels and pipelines. In the past, and continuing to the present, asbestos has been a commonly used insulating material. Insulating material that is purchased is fabricated within shops on Du Pont plants, is installed, and eventually is removed. Removal of old insulation as in demolition may present a risk of encountering types of asbestos that are not commonly used today, including crocidolite which is acknowledged to be particularly dangerous with respect to the causation of mesothelioma (a type of cancer). Besides its use in insulating material, asbestos is also purchased and used as an additive material to perform special functions in some products.

Attendance at the Conference will not be limited in numbers provided you will inform us in advance of the numbers from your department who will attend so that arrangements may be made.

It is anticipated that there will be some expenses involved in arranging the Conference and in obtaining the best possible scientists for the program. Haskell Laboratory will have to ask that the costs be borne by the departments sending participants in a manner similar to the registration fees for any professional conference.

In deciding upon participation by representatives of your department we would urge that anyone who needs to have a good understanding of this problem and how to handle it in order to fulfill the obligations of the departments and plants should have an opportunity to attend.

It is requested that prompt attention be given to this matter so that in thirty days we may have the names of prospective attendees. A date has not been chosen yet, but we expect to arrange to hold the Conference no more than sixty days from now. The date will be given you as soon as it can be fixed.

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY
JAMES F. MORGAN

JAMES F. MORGAN
CONSULTANT,
INDUSTRIAL HYGIENE

JFM/bjd
Attachment