

THE UNITED GAS IMPROVEMENT COMPANY

1401 ARCH STREET

PHILADELPHIA 5, PA.

November 20, 1957

Dr. Robert A. Kehoe
University of Cincinnati
The Kettering Laboratory
College of Medicine - Eden Avenue
Cincinnati 19, Ohio

Dear Dr. Kehoe:

I wish to thank you for your kind letter of November 15, 1957.

Our Company has perfected gas filtering devices for use on domestic gas appliances. The filtering medium is a special mineral wool manufactured to our specifications by Johns-Manville Corp. at their plant in Richmond, Indiana.

The actual filters are assembled and distributed by a number of licensees in various parts of the country, one of whom raised the question of a possible health hazard to their employees from handling the mineral wool packings.

Mr. Jesse Lieberman of the Department of Health of the City of Philadelphia having no information on the matter suggested that I write to you but gave me the incorrect address, which accounts for the delay in the delivery of my letter. In the meantime the Johns-Manville Corp. furnished us with the following information:

"The material is a complex silicate containing no asbestos or free silica and, therefore, cannot be a factor in causing silicosis.

"Some years ago, a survey was conducted by the Industrial Health Section of Metropolitan Life Insurance Company at one of our plants where mineral wool had been manufactured for nearly forty years.

"This survey was most thorough and included an examination of the X-rays of nearly 400 employees, the majority of whom had been engaged in manufacturing and handling mineral wool for more than ten years and a large number for more than twenty-five years. Not a single case of silicosis or even of abnormal lung fibrosis was discovered as a result of these examinations, and we were advised that we might safely conclude mineral wool dust was 'innocuous from the standpoint of lung fibrosis'."

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Dr. Robert A. Kehoe
University of Cincinnati

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November 20, 1957

We would appreciate hearing from you if your own investigations reveal any information at variance with the above.

Very truly yours,

C. W. Jordan
C. W.

CWJ:cw

November 15, 1957

Mr. C. W. Jordan
The United Gas Improvement Company
1401 Arch Street
Philadelphia 5, Pennsylvania

Dear Mr. Jordan:

Your letter of September 13 arrived on my desk after a somewhat circuituous trip occasioned by its incorrect address. Partly because I could not account for its coming to me, but mainly because I've had no time to handle any but the most immediately urgent items of my correspondence for the past several months, my reply is tardy. I must ask for your forbearance.

Until fairly recently, we in this Laboratory have had no direct experience or concern with the problems, if any, involved in the handling of glass wool - to which, I take it, your inquiry refers. We are looking into certain practical aspects of the matter at this time (I assume that this fact must have come to your attention through some means), and if any significant hazards are involved in the handling of the various forms of this product, we shall probably learn of them. This may take some time, and I cannot anticipate when or in what form our report on this matter will appear.

I should say, I think, that I am not aware of the existence of any significant hazard in the handling of fibre glass, beyond the obvious likelihood that some degree of mechanical injury to the skin may occur under certain conditions. I should think that the use of leather gloves would obviate the greater part of this hazard. I realize that a guess of this type is not to be taken very seriously, and that only experience, accompanied by careful and critical observation, can serve a useful purpose in such a matter.

Despite a few ambiguities in the scanty medical literature on this subject, I think it very unlikely that there is danger of any significant injury to the respiratory apparatus from the material that may be suspended in the air breathed by men who work with this material. Here again, I suggest that the better part of wisdom would be to withhold judgment until the facts have been sorted out. I only comment as I have above for the reason that I know of no incidents of occupational origin that would lead me to believe or to have the strong suspicion, that this material has any very great capacity for harm.

Very truly yours,

Robert A. Kehoe, M. D.

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