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Johns-Manville

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Subject: OCTOBER 8, 1973 STRATEGY MEETING
FDA - TALC REGULATION

During the above-mentioned meeting the writer was assigned the responsibility by Dr. F. L. Pundsack to be prepared to comment at our October 18-19 meeting with the FDA on the statement, "Talc can be processed to remove all asbestos." (See: "Topics for Meeting with Dr. Alexander M. Schmidt on October 18, 1973" by R. P. Carter).

In follow-up to this assignment, detailed conversations were held with Art Lankenau, Vice President, Hazen Research, Golden, Colorado and W. T. Caneer, Colorado School of Mines Research Institute. Both men are eminently well qualified to speak on this particular subject. We obtained essentially the same story from both. This is as follows:

1. Froth flotation is the only industrial process that will effectively separate talc from associated asbestos minerals.

2. Those asbestos minerals most commonly associated with talc are tremolite and chrysotile.

3. While some separation is possible, the process is by no means perfect. Complete separation is impossible to achieve even at very low recoveries and high losses. In order to reduce tremolite in talc to less than 1 percent, losses in the order of 40-60 percent or higher may be required. This makes this type of separation uneconomical for most industrial talc uses.

Work done at CSMRI on our own G-2 talc, which contains between 5 and 10 percent tremolite in its natural state, showed that tremolite could be reduced to 0.5 to 1.0 percent by froth flotation. Talc recovery at this purity level was 40-50 percent. Complete removal of tremolite was found to be impossible. The process appeared unattractive and the project dropped. With other talcs higher in tremolite content recoveries would be even lower.

Only those talcs naturally low in asbestos content could be expected to meet the FDA proposed test method and specification. Here we are dependent upon the vagaries of nature--a difficult situation industrially.

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