



A/C Pipe
Producers Association
Executive Committee
International Affairs Committee

TO
J. F. Welch
FROM J. F. Welch, Vice President

W. W. Kelly
H. Bradley
S. Leggett
W. P. Smith
File
DATE: December 9, 1982

Internal Correspondence

SUBJECT World Health Organization (WHO) - Statement on Safety of A/C Pipe

ACTION REQUIRED: Review for information

Background

For what appear to be political reasons, the Government of Saudi Arabia has expressed concerns about the safety of A/C pipe for the conveyance of potable water. In response to these concerns, the Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs solicited the comments of a number of governments and the World Health Organization Eastern Mediterranean Regional Office (WHO/EMRO).

Current Status

Enclosed is the WHO/EMRO response, as obtained from Dr. Faroud Mansour of Eternit. While the Sanitary Engineering Advisor concludes "there should be no significant hazard due to drinking water which has passed through asbestos cement pipe," he adds the caveat "if it is not a corrosive water which can attack cement and release asbestos fibers." The presence of this proviso negates in large measure the positive impact of the "no significant hazard" assessment by implying that if fibers are present then some hazard may exist. This is an unfortunate embodiment of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and public health philosophy of "no exposure - no risk." However, the document is routed with hopes that it may be useful to member companies under special circumstances.

Staff is attempting to determine whether WHO has completed its review of the medical evidence on ingested asbestos and whether it will be issuing a more consistent, formal statement on the safety of A/C pipe. A similar development is being monitored within the World Bank and will be reported as information becomes available.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call.

JFW/ajb

Enclosure

cc: A. Kahn, Esq.
AIA
AIA/NA
CAIC

copies to: Executive Committee

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J. Cran
L. Taylor

International Affairs Committee

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ORGANISATION MONDIALE
DE LA SANTÉ

Ref: 100

Date: 1, Feb. 1982

In reply please refer to
Form No. 100 of 1979

To: Director General
Department of Public Utilities
Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs
Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

Recently you requested that I review the health hazards involved in the use of asbestos-cement pipe for drinking water distribution systems within the Kingdom, and that I prepare a paper on this subject. This paper has now been completed and is attached.

The paper is based upon my own knowledge, review of reference material available, and material obtained from the Eastern Mediterranean Regional Office of the World Health Organization.

Conclusions are essentially that:

1. Occupational health hazards may exist for workers due to exposure to asbestos in asbestos delivery (to the factory) and in pipe manufacturing. These can be greatly reduced by the use of proper procedures.

2. A low potential hazard may exist for workers due to airborne asbestos during installation and maintenance of asbestos-cement pipe. This can be reduced even lower by the use of proper procedures.

3. There should be no significant hazard due to drinking water which has passed through asbestos-cement pipe if it is not a corrosive water which can attack cement and release asbestos fibers. Good engineering practice indicates that corrosive water can cause serious pipe destruction and greatly reduce the life of the pipe, but there is no reason to restrict the use of A/C pipes if the transmitted water is non-corrosive to cement. The use of A/C pipe for the transmission of non-corrosive water is good engineering practice and also should present no significant health to the user.

Respectfully

Donald J. Hernandez
Sanitary Engineering Advisor
SAM/SES/CO1

Copies to: Regional Director, EMRO, WHO
WHO, Riyadh.

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