Asbestos Watch - Nov./Dec. 1988

Tremolite Asbestos Still Unregulated Contaminated Playsand In Use

Under mining industry pressure, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has extended for one year their ruling that the OSHA asbestos standard does not apply to tremolite asbestos. Tremolite is found in talc and its by-products, such as children's playsand. (See article in July/August *Asbestos Watch*.) White Lung Association members, consumer protection groups and some legislators are trying to get OSHA and the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) to regulate tremolite like any other asbestos and ban its use in playsand.

The talc mining industry's efforts to put pressure on government officials, is being led by RT Vanderbilt Company. Robert Strauss, former head of the Democratic National Committee, is a partner in the Washington law firm which represents RTV. Studies by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), which produces risk assessment information necessary for regulation, have been compromised by mining interests. Individuals in NIOSH have been disciplined by director J. Donald Millar because they "unwittingly just got a little too cozy with a particular industry" (RTV). The fact that no "overt conflict of interest" was established will be a moot point after agency personnel have gone on to lucrative jobs for the corporations.

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Asbestos Watch urges its readers to contact OSHA, NIOSH and the CPSC about this issue. Directors of the agencies are: John Pendergrass, Asst. Sec. OSHA, 200 Constitution Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20210, (202) 523-7162; Dr. J. Donald Millar, NIOSH, 1600 Clifton Rd. NE, Atlanta, GA 30333, (404) 639-3771; Terrance Scanlon, Ex. Dir. CPSC, 5401 Westbard Ave., Rm. 400, Bethesda, MD 20207, (301) 492-6550.

Who Says It's "Safe"?

Experts on protecting human health should be the ones who set the safety limits on toxic substances, shouldn't they? Recent research shows that standards are often set by "experts" in protecting corporate profit, not lives.

Threshold Limit Values (TLVs), the levels of toxic substances that people can supposedly be exposed to without health risk, are established by the American Conference of Governmental Industrial Hygienists (ACGIH). In an article in the American Journal of Industrial Medicine, Dr. Barry I. Castleman, author of *Asbestos: Medical and Legal Aspects* and Dr. Grace E. Ziem, MD, show that the process followed by the ACGIH in setting TLV limits has been compromised by corporate influence.

TLVs for 104 substances were significantly influenced by unpublished *corporate* communications. Fifteen TLVs were based *solely* on that source of information. The ACGIH committee's handling of TLVs for lead and 7 carcinogens showed corporate influence and interaction with the committee. Corporate representatives listed as "consultants" were given primary responsibility

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SC White Lung VP Honored — J. Wilber Walker, asbestos victim, White Lung member and civic leader, was honored for his years of service to the Greenville, South Carolina, community on August 31st. After a reception hosted by the mayor, a plaque was unveiled dedicating the newly opened West Greenville homes in his honor. Mr. Walker was instrumental in obtaining the land for the homes for the local neighborhood association.