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HOLLINGSWORTH & VOSE COMPANY

TECHNICAL AND INDUSTRIAL PAPERS

ROPE-JUTE-RAG-KRAFT AND SULPHITE SPECIALTIES

MILLS AT
EAST WALPOLE, MASS.
WEST GROTON, MASS.

EXECUTIVE OFFICES
EAST WALPOLE, MASS.

SALES OFFICES AT
NEW YORK, N. Y.
CHICAGO, ILL.

June 2, 1954

Mr. Bruce G. Lemon, Treasurer
Hollingsworth & Vose Company
East Walpole, Massachusetts

Dear Bruce:

The following is a resume of the asbestos bearing dust situation at the West Groton plant of H & V Specialties Co., Inc. This plant began operations during June, 1952.

During the latter part of August 1952, Mr. Edward J. Meehan of the State Division of Labor and Industrial Safety, visited the H & V Specialties Company, made an inspection and gave several verbal recommendations. Among them was one regarding the dust condition involving asbestos. He recommended that some chemists from the State Department be brought to Specialties' West Groton plant to take samples of air. On October 27, 1952, Mr. Meehan, Mr. Bayley and Mr. Comproni came to the plant and took an air analysis. That analysis is on file under date of October 29, 1952. I quote the following from the report of October 29th:

"An evaluation was made of the dust concentration in the working atmosphere at the picker-blending and carding machines. The USA Midget Impinger Flasks were used and results are tabulated below:

Sample No.	Time	Location	Results Dust (Asbestos & Cotton) Millions of Particles per Cubic Feet of Air
1	10 minutes, 52 seconds	Operator's exposure feeding picker-blender second run material.	8.5
2	10 minutes, 30 seconds	Operator's exposure, discharge end of machine second run material.	8.3
3	10 minutes, 50 seconds	Operator's exposure feeding blender, first run material.	9.3

[redacted]

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Sample No.	Time	Location	Results Dust (Asbestos & Cotton) Millions of Particles per Cubic Foot of Air
4	10 minutes, 37 seconds	Operator's Exposure Discharge end of machine, first run material.	11.0
5	10 minutes, 49 seconds	General air side and front of breaker card No. 1	6.3
6	16 minutes, 30 seconds	General air take-off ends and side of finisher card No. 1	3.5
		Maximum Allowable Concentration	15

"The maximum allowable concentration for respirable... asbestos dust in air is given as 5 million particles per cubic foot of air. However, since there is only 30% asbestos in the mixture, using the same reasoning as we do in the evaluation of the maximum allowable concentration for free silica, we arrive at a figure of 15 million particles per cubic foot of air. Therefore, the above results indicate that if our assumption is valid the concentration of the dust is not excessive."

n June 24, 1953 as a result of my request, Mr. H.C. Burnham representng Specialties' insurance company (Hartford Accident & Indemnity Company) came to the plant and looked over the operation. He recommended n a letter signed by C.R. Sinclaire, the District Engineer for the nsurance company that x-rays be taken of all employees in H & V Specialties Co., Inc. and that the same should be done for all new employees f Specialties. This was also recommended by the State Engineer and hemists back in October 1952.

n January of 1954, Mr. Nichols and Mr. Nicholson told me that beginning mmediately all new employees of both Specialties and Hollingsworth & ose Company were to have a chest x-ray in addition to the regular pre-mployment physical examination. I arranged through Dr. Cyrus Commos for the chest x-rays to be taken at the Groton Community Hospital and o be read by Dr. Robert O. Vance, Radiologist, of Boston.

he first part of May 1954, Mr. Milton E. Wheeler, Jr., an employee of pecialties spoke to Mr. O'Malley about the possibility of having a hest x-ray.

n May 5, 1954, Mr. Nichols and Mr. Nicholson asked me to make arrangements to have all of the present employees of H & V Specialties Co., nc. have chest x-rays. This was arranged for at the Groton Hospital.

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On the morning of May 5, 1952, Mr. Meehan, the State Inspector, in company with Mr. Barley and Mr. Compioni visited the Specialties plant and then came to my office. They stated that the dust condition in the department was considerably better and practically nil. They also again recommended that chest x-rays for all new employees and the employees in Specialties be taken. I told them that we had already started having chest x-rays for all new employees and that we were going to have the same done for all present employees.

On Friday, May 7th, Mr. Thomas Otea asked Mr. O'Malley if the company was going to have chest x-rays of the employees in Specialties. Mr. O'Malley told him that arrangements were now being made and that the x-rays would be started next week.

Six x-rays were taken on May 14th, six on May 17th, seven on May 20th and one on May 21st. They were examined and read by Dr. Vance and all were negative except the one for George W. Oakes. Dr. Vance reported that in his opinion Oakes' x-ray indicated an old condition.

It had previously been arranged that all reports were to be considered confidential and a direct report on all x-rays was to be given to H & V Specialties Co., Inc. Unfortunately, the x-ray technician on completing the pictures made the following remark to an employee "All x-rays appear negative except that of George W. Oakes." The employee to whom he made the remark, apparently passed it on among the other employees with the result being that Oakes was notified indirectly of the result of his x-ray.

On May 21st, it was decided that a talk should be held with the Hartford Insurance Company to get their thoughts and recommendations regarding the x-ray of Mr. Oakes. On Monday, May 24th, Mr. James M. Raher came to the West Groton office and the case was discussed with him. He thought that the employee, Mr. Oakes, should be told of his condition and that we should get a recommendation from Dr. Vance and Dr. Comninos.

On Tuesday, May 25th, at about 10:30 a.m., Mr. O'Malley and I went to the home of Mr. George Oakes and told him of the x-ray finding. Mr. Oakes told us that he knew of this condition and that some three or four years ago, when the Massachusetts Tuberculosis Association Mobile Unit came to the West Groton plant and took chest x-rays of all those who wished them, he had one taken and was informed that he should consult his doctor. He contacted Dr. Comninos who, he stated, told him of the chest condition. This chest x-ray was taken prior to his employment by Specialties.

On Tuesday, May 25th, Mr. Eugene Smith and I went to the office of Dr. Cyrus Comninos. I told him that the x-ray technician, Mr. Hickson, had told Harold Pelote, when he had his x-ray taken, that up to that time all of the x-rays were negative except the one for George Oakes and that I thought it was very definitely a breach of ethics and faith and that Mr. Hickson, in my opinion, had no right to give this information to anyone except Dr. Comninos and Dr. Vance. Dr. Comninos stated that he was very sorry this had happened and further stated that he would send a letter of explanation and apology to Mr. Nicholson.

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Accompanied by Dr. Comminos, Mr. Smith and I went to the Groton Hospital where we discussed the x-rays with Dr. Vance. Also present were Miss MacLeod, superintendent of the hospital, Mr. Hickron, the hospital x-ray technician, and Dr. Vance's nurse. Dr. Vance told us that the condition found in Mr. Oakes' lungs was of long standing and from the history of his previous work, he would think that it was caused possibly from stone dust. He further stated that his chest was completely healed and that there was scar tissue present. I asked him what he would recommend for this man and if allowed to continue to work in Specialties would it in any way aggravate that previous condition. He stated that very definitely asbestos could aggravate the condition and that if by any chance he should pick up any tuberculosis, it could be attributable to the asbestos exposure. His recommendation was that he be immediately taken out of Specialties and that he should not at any time work where there was a dust condition.

On Wednesday, May 26th, at about 2:30 p.m., Mr. Nichols, Mr. O'Malley and I went to Mr. Oakes home. He was sleeping and his wife got him up and brought him downstairs. I told him that in view of the condition of his chest and the recommendations of Dr. Vance, Dr. Comminos and Mr. Raher, that we could not allow him to work in Specialties any longer, but that Mr. MacMaster was going on a ninety-day leave-of-absence starting June 1st and that we could give him a transfer to that job and as soon as any job became available on the bulletin board, he would be eligible to bid for the same. He seemed at a loss for something to say and having just awakened him, I suggested that he contact me the next day when he came for his pay. This seemed to be agreeable to him.

On Thursday, May 27th, Mr. MacMaster spoke to me about Mr. Oakes, stating that Mr. Oakes had gone to Dr. Comminos and that the doctor had told him that there was no reason why he could not work in his regular department (Specialties) and that asbestos would not hurt him. I contacted Dr. Comminos and he told me, over the telephone, that he told Mr. Oakes that if the company wanted to have him sign a release that it would be alright for him to work there and the he, Dr. Comminos, would talk to the company along that line. I told Dr. Comminos that if there was the possibility of a reoccurrence as had been stated to us on Tuesday, May 25th, that we could not allow him to stay there. Mr. MacMaster, Mr. Warren, Mr. McCann, and Mr. Oakes came into the office and asked for a discussion of the case. Mr. Eugene E. Smith attended this discussion. Mr. Oakes stated that he had been to see Dr. Comminos and was told by him that there was no reason why he could not work in the department, that his chest was all healed up from the old ailment and it would not bother him. The suggestion was made that Mr. Oakes be x-rayed and examined by another hospital and doctor. The Burbank Hospital in Fitchburg was suggested. Mr. Nicholson was contacted and he stated that he felt that the insurance company should be told the complete story and that they should be allowed to make the decision.

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On Friday, May 28th, a meeting was held in Mr. Smith's office at West Groton with Mr. James M. Raher of the Hartford Insurance Company, Eugene E. Smith and I present. Mr. Oakes' case was discussed at great length and it was decided that, in complete fairness to the employee, he should be allowed to have another x-ray taken by an x-ray man of his own choice and then compare the reports.

On Tuesday, June 1, 1954, Mr. Smith and I went to Mr. Oakes' home to talk with him about the possibility of his having another x-ray taken at a place of his choice, but met him on Squannacook Road in his car and discussed the matter with him there. Mr. Oakes stated that he did not feel it was necessary to have another x-ray taken since the condition had been with him for a number of years as a result of having worked in coal mines in Kentucky. He had been aware of the condition and had left the work in the coal mines because of it. He stated that he did not feel that another x-ray would change the picture and that he had decided that, as per our suggestion, it was better for him to leave the department and that he would go, on Monday next, June 7th, to the Shipping Department and take over the job vacated by R.W. MacMaster who is on leave-of-absence and that in the meantime he would watch the bulletin board for any possible jobs that he could bid on.

On Wednesday, June 2, I called Mr. Nichols and informed him of this decision by Mr. Oakes. I have also called Mr. Raher of the Hartford Insurance Company.

Sincerely yours,

HOLLINGSWORTH & VOSE COMPANY

Frank C. Harmon

Frank C. Harmon
Employment Manager

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