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sion, said: "We are confident that when the case is tried we will be completely vindicated." Meanwhile, the Interior Department has provided the Justice Department with information that "seven or eight" other companies now engaged in offshore drilling operations in the gulf also lack the safety devices, said William Pecora, director of the Interior Department's geological survey bureau.

...The Justice Department is charging Chevron under the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act of 1953. This is the first indictment under the act, which requires the use of a choke, situated below the water and designed to cut off oil flow if control on the surface platform fails. Drill operators sometimes remove the chokes when they get fouled with sand and impede oil flow. Interior Secretary Walter Hickel states that Chevron, a subsidiary of Standard Oil of California, failed to maintain storm chokes on 137 of 178 wells in an offshore area called block 41. The Interior Department is "determined to investigate each and every case in which we have reason to believe that companies drilling under federal lease knowingly and willfully broke the rule we laid down," said Hickel.

ASBESTOS SPRAYING STOPPED: Asbestos spraying operations at three New York City skyscraper building sites have been stopped and summons were handed out at three other locations in the wake of the Department of Air Resources newly promulgated regulations concerning use of the suspected carcinogenic material. The regulations do not ban outright the use of the material but rather impose severe restrictions on enclosing the work area during spraying, mandates the use of respirators and coveralls by spraying crews and cleaning up any loose asbestos from the job site....The Department of Air Resources held a five-hour private hearing on alleged asbestos emission from one of the job sites but the exercise was largely a matter of record-building, since only medical experts, engineers and an air pollution inspector testified. The contractor did not testify but voluntarily stopped spraying operations. The private hearing was adjourned until today (May 11). The city is expected to have a two-day public hearing on the asbestos problem within the next few weeks. Medical experts contend that certain types of cancer are 1,000 times greater among asbestos workers than among the general population.

...One of the major spraying contractors in the New York area told AKN that the situation was largely political. The new regulations were issued on a Saturday and were to go into effect at 7 a.m. the following Monday. The contractor claims to have been unaware of the regulation until he received it in the mail late Monday afternoon. Even the Department of Air Resources concedes it may be on shaky ground promulgating and enforcing such regulations before a public hearing is held.

...Being tested as a substitute for asbestos in New York is a plastic material produced by U.S. Mineral Co. And in Canada an intumescent mastic material is being marketed as an insulating material. The problem with both of these substitutes, however, is their high cost.

AUTO HEARINGS: A Senate subcommittee plans hearings next week on several bills aimed at pushing the federal government into using nonpolluting vehicles.

* The Government Operations subcommittee on executive reorganization hearings, tentatively set to begin May 19, will look at one bill (S3506), introduced by subcommittee chairman Abraham Ribicoff (D., Conn.) that would require all pre-1965 government-owned passenger cars to be retrofitted with pollution control devices.

* Another measure (S3557), introduced by Sen. Frank Church, would require the government, after Jan. 1, 1971, to purchase only automobiles that use unleaded fuel.

...While the witness list and dates for testifying have not been made firm, testimony is expected from the federal government--including the Department of Transportation, General Services Administration and the Department of Health, Education and Welfare as well as four major automobile manufacturers.

