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Highlights of This Issue

OSHA PROPOSES "NO DETECTABLE LEVEL" STANDARD FOR VINYL CHLORIDE:

Moving with unaccustomed speed under great pressure from certain segments of labor and Congress, OSHA has proposed a permanent standard of "no detectable level" for worker exposure to vinyl chloride.

Detection of any amount of vinyl chloride in the workplace would trigger work practices to prevent employee exposure, OSHA explained. This would apply to all manufacturing operations in which vinyl chloride is used.

OSHA's proposed permanent standard, published in the Federal Register May 10, allows 30 days for comments before a final temporary standard is issued, expected in about six months. Written data, or requests for hearing on the proposal, should be submitted by June 10 to the Docket Officer, Docket OSH-36, Room 230-MNWA, 1726 M St. N.W., OSHA, U.S. Department of Labor, Washington, D.C. 20210.

The Society of the Plastics Industry, which would be greatly impacted, immediately called the proposed standard "excessively and unrealistically restrictive" and said it will urge OSHA to hold hearings as well as to grant additional time to keep plants operating. A zero tolerance level would make it impossible for industry to operate, it said. It has commissioned Arthur D. Little, Inc., to prepare an economic impact survey that is expected to be completed in six to eight weeks.

But spokesmen for organized labor—principally the United Rubber Workers, Oil, Chemical & Atomic Workers and the AFL-CIO's Industrial Union Department—expressed greater degree of satisfaction with the proposed standard, although they too indicated they would fight for even greater strengthening of the standard to tighten the language.

The OSHA proposed standard would include:

* Limiting manufacture, use or handling of vinyl chloride to certain "regulated areas."

* Monitoring the regulated area atmosphere to detect measurable levels (1 ppm) of the chemical and to determine individual employee exposure.

* Allowing employees or their designated representatives to observe monitoring activities.

* Initiating an engineering and work practice program and a respiratory protection program for employees in the regulated area when detectable levels of vinyl chloride are monitored. Respiratory protection would require continuous flow and pressure demand types of respirators.

* Establishing a requirement that protective clothing be provided by employers and used by employees in regulated areas. Food, beverages and like products would be prohibited in these regulated areas.

* Requiring written operational and emergency plans with employee training in routine and emergency duties.

* Providing initial and subsequent medical examinations at no expense to the employee. A beginning date would be based on public comment on the proposal. Records of the results would be retained for the duration of employment plus five years, or for 20 years, whichever is longer.

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* Requiring records be maintained of monitoring, medical exams, and entry to regulated areas by employees and that they be made available to OSHA and NIOSH.

* Requiring, by a date to be set upon issuance of the final standard, that employers report the location of each establishment with one or more regulated areas, and the number of employees in each regulated area during normal operations, including maintenance. Reports would also be required to be submitted to OSHA within 24 hours of any incident that results in the release of vinyl chloride in any area where employees may be exposed, followed within 15 days by a detailed written report.

The proposed permanent standard was issued by OSHA just as an important meeting on vinyl chloride began in New York under auspices of the New York Academy of Sciences (*OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH & SAFETY LETTER*, April 22). Co-sponsors were the American Cancer Society, National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, NIOSH and the Society for Occupational and Environmental Health.

Shortly before the meeting and the standard, the Manufacturing Chemists Association reported that vinyl chloride workers have experienced over-all death rates that "compare favorably" to those experienced by other U.S. industrial groups. Administered by MCA, the survey was conducted by Tabershaw-Cooper Associates, Inc. The survey showed that there appeared to be suggestive dose-related increases in the incidence of cancers of the urinary organs and the brain in longer-exposed workers, as compared with their counterparts who, at the time of death, had worked for shorter periods in jobs exposing them to vinyl chloride. The study showed, however, that statistically significant differences in mortality appeared only where reported death rates were lower than that of the general population.

Several Federal agencies, notably the Consumer Product Safety Commission and the Environmental Protection Agency, are also engaged in fact-finding missions–in addition to HEW and Labor–to determine principally whether there is any hazard to the general public.

SENATE REJECTS MAJOR EFFORT TO AMEND OSHA LAW:

An effort by Sen. Peter Dominick (R-Colo.) to amend seriously the Occupational Safety and Health Act–in which he was joined by 29 other Senators–was rejected by the Senate by a vote of 47 to 40.

The amendments would have made penalties for serious employer violations permissive rather than mandatory and would have removed from the Labor Department power to impose fines for "non-serious" violations.

Dominick, with support from the Chamber of Commerce of the U.S. and the National Association of Manufacturers, used a parliamentary maneuver to bring his amendments to the floor by bypassing the Senate Labor and Public Welfare Committee, whose chairman, Sen. Harrison Williams (D-N.J.), opposed the measures. Dominick attached the amendments to an unrelated bill to extend the National Labor Relations Act to employees of non-profit hospitals.

His amendments would also have required OSHA to file an economic impact statement with each proposed new standard, in which the cost of compliance would have been stated. The Labor Department opposed this step, saying it would require "either massive increase in staff or a staggering administrative burden on existing resources."

In addition, his amendments would permit an employer cited for a violation to apply for a variance from a safety or health standard in the "belief" that his work procedures offered "equally effective" protection, thus staying further enforcement until final action had been taken.

Another amendment would free employers from the requirement to keep posted a notice of a violation for three days after correcting the hazard. Both the Labor Department and AFL-CIO opposed this as denying a worker the right of information about the hazard.

Another provision of the amendments would require OSHA, in the case of employers with 100 or fewer employees, to provide consultations at the work site without issuing citations for violations noted in the process. The Labor Department defended the purpose of the legislation but said there was an ample opportunity for off-site consultations to employers willing to seek them.

The amendments were tabled by a vote of 47 to 40. Voting against tabling (and in favor of the amendments) were a coalition of Republicans and Southern Democrats, joined by a sprinkling of Northern and Western Democrats. During the debate, there were frequent references to the large volume of mail received by Senators on this subject.

Note: Although the Dominick-led effort failed, other attempts to amend the law will be made in both the

Senate and House. One major parliamentary push is to attach the proposed amendments to appropriations bills for HEW and Labor.

DEBATE ON PROFESSIONAL ETHICS ENLIVENS INDUSTRIAL MEDICAL MEETING:

An interesting and provocative discussion on professional ethics of occupational physicians employed by corporations spiced the annual American Industrial Health Conference in Miami Beach. And, incidentally, it was the last meeting of the Industrial Medical Association, which voted to change its name to the American Occupational Medical Association (but the nurses continue to be called the American Association of Industrial Nurses).

The philosophical question of whether physicians employed by industry are free to publish adverse data on the health of their employees or whether they might be forced to withhold such information by management because it might be costly or misconstrued has been a recurrent theme for many years. However, it was raised anew six months ago by Dr. William E. Morton of the University of Oregon Medical School in a letter to the Journal of Occupational Medicine. He openly questioned the ethics of industrial physicians who withheld such data from publication.

Dr. Morton's letter drew replies from several industrial physicians (*OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH & SAFETY LETTER*, Jan. 8) who disputed his contentions, and subsequently Dr. Morton acknowledged that he did not have firm documentation of his charges but raised the questions for debate.

IMA itself took up the challenge, and president Dr. Thomas Ely of Eastman Kodak appointed a committee headed by Dr. Norbert Roberts of Exxon and a past president of IMA, to consider what steps could be taken to screen such information in advance of publication but without any attempt to whitewash the data. At any rate, the subject was discussed at some length in a "cabana conference" during the meeting in Florida. Participants included Drs. Morton and Roberts, as well as Dr. Irving Tabershaw, editor of JOM, and Dr. Lorin Kerr of the United Mine Workers.

By a show of hands, several (in fact, most) of the physicians indicated that they were not restrained by their management in any way from publishing. But several in the audience said they were inhibited in one way or another, directly or indirectly, by management edict from publishing as fully as they would like. Still others questioned the sweeping generalization of the ethics accusation, saying it should be more specifically directed to the companies involved; some doubted that it was more prevalent among industrial physicians than any other specialty or in fact by physicians generally as opposed to other professions.

Thus, the discussion pivoted on whether an industrial physician's primary loyalty lies with his patients, his employer or to his profession. Clearly, the IMA committee will attempt to recommend steps which enable a physician to blend all three without sacrificing any. Dr. Kerr himself summarized the dilemma faced by union physicians, who cannot make any recommendations which might cost a worker his job.

The Occupational Health Institute is also looking into the problem and may also take a position or offer its services in some way to help industrial physicians resolve the question—if, indeed, any help is needed.

The discussion on ethics, along with similar cabana debates on legislation and socio-economic issues, reflected the growing concern of occupational physicians with national non-clinical problems, even though there was ample discussion of the latter on the formal program. Example: The AOMA (nee IMA) will testify before the Senate Appropriations Committee on behalf of more money for NIOSH.

One paper merits special attention, in our view. That, unsurprisingly (because he has a history of making good points well), was the presentation by Prof. Norton Nelson of New York University's Institute of Environmental Medicine. He pointed to several deficiencies in occupational health: lack of money, concentration on safety at the expense of health, inadequate role of labor, low visibility of occupational physicians, etc. He expressed the hope that occupational physicians would have a larger, not smaller, part in total responsibility for worker health care—but whether or not they do depends more on them than any other outside force, he added.

At the business meeting, it was announced that there were 3,701 active members as of March, and the organization had assets of $232,000 as of March 31. The president's gavel changed hands, but stayed in the Rochester area with election of Dr. Craig Wright of Xerox to succeed Dr. Ely (Dr. Wright got off to a very bad start, we regret to say, by referring to something or other as its "vinyl resting place"!); other officers: president-elect, Dr. George E. Spencer, New England Telephone; lst vice president—Dr. Miles O. Colwell, Alcoa; 2nd vice president—Dr. Robert S. Hockwald, Pacific Telephone; Secretary—Dr. Bruce E. Douglass, [illegible] Medical School; Treasurer—Dr. George H. Franck, Western Electric.

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HERE'S A SUMMARY OF NIOSH RECOMMENDATIONS ON 15 TOXIC AGENTS TO DATE:

Because they have been coming out in bits and pieces and a lot of people can't keep track of them, we are herewith publishing a quick, easy-to-read summary of the NIOSH recommendations on toxic agents, as forwarded to OSHA in criteria documents. Thus far, OSHA has promulgated a standard only on asbestos; all others remain recommendations.

ARSENIC—Occupational exposure shall be controlled so that no worker is exposed to a concentration of arsenic greater than 0.05 mg As/cu m of air determined on a time-weighted average exposure for up to a 10-hour work day, 40-hour work week. Arsenic shall be removed from work areas by vacuum cleaning or wet methods. Cleaning may be performed by washing down with a hose, provided that a fine spray of water has first been laid down. Sweeping or other methods which can stir the dust into the air shall not be used. Arsenic trichloride shall be handled only in enclosed systems sufficient to prevent skin contact and to prevent worker exposure in excess of the environmental standard. Records of all sampling and of medical examinations shall be maintained for at least 20 years after the individual's employment is terminated. Transmitted to OSHA January 24, 1974. Contractor: Tabershaw-Cooper Associates.

ASBESTOS—A permanent Federal standard promulgated by OSHA, effective July 7, 1972, established concentration of no more than 5.0 asbestos fibers greater than 5 microns in length for an eight-hour workday, with no peak concentration to exceed 10 fibers as determined by a minimum sampling time of 15 minutes. This would be reduced to 2.0 fibers by July 1, 1976. The standard also applies to a number of naturally occurring hydrated mineral silicates incombustible in air and separated into filaments.

BERYLLIUM—No worker shall be exposed to a concentration of beryllium more than 2 micrograms of total airborne particulate beryllium per cubic meter of air for an eight-hour day and no peak concentration shall exceed 25 ug/Be/m^3 determined by a minimum sampling time of 30 minutes. The recommended standard is intended to protect against development of acute and chronic beryllium disease. A comprehensive preplacement history and physical exam for all worker applicants shall be provided to include as a minimum a 14x17 chest x-ray, baseline pulmonary function (forced vital capacity and forced expiratory volume at one second) and a baseline weight. Respiratory protective devices shall be used any time the actual or projected level of beryllium will exceed an eight-hour time-weighted average of 2 ug/m^3. Sampling, monitoring and recordkeeping requirements are specified on monthly and quarterly basis. Transmitted June 30, 1972.

CARBON MONOXIDE—Occupational exposure to carbon monoxide shall be controlled so that no worker shall be exposed at a concentration greater than 35 ppm determined as a time-weighted average exposure for an eight-hour workday, as measured with a portable, direct-reading hopcalite-type carbon monoxide meter calibrated against known concentrations of CO, or with gas detector tube units certified under Title 42 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Part 84. No level of carbon monoxide to which workers are exposed shall exceed a ceiling concentration of 200 ppm. Because employees with overt cardiovascular disease may not be protected by an occupational exposure to 35 ppm of CO, a medical program should be instituted consisting of pre-placement and periodic exams, with special attention to the cardiovascular system and to medical conditions which could be exacerbated by exposure to CO. Transmitted August 3, 1972.

CHROMIC ACID—Occupational exposure to chromic acid shall be controlled so that no worker is exposed either to: (1) a concentration of chromic acid greater than 0.05 milligram as chromium trioxide per cubic meter of air determined by a time-weighted average exposure for an eight-hour workday, 40-hour work week, or (2) a ceiling concentration in excess of 0.1 milligram as chromium trioxide per cubic meter as determined by a sampling time of 15 minutes. Records of medical exams and sampling must be maintained for at least 20 years. Transmitted July 17, 1973. Contractor: George D. Clayton & Associates.

COKE OVEN EMISSIONS—Due to absence of reliable dose response data, the report does not recommend an environmental air standard as a safe exposure level. Instead, it recommends a combination of respiratory protection and "work practices" or operating procedures designed to reduce the emissions and the workers' exposure. The existing Federal standard is 0.2 mg/cu m.

HOT ENVIRONMENTS—Employee exposure to heat in the workplace should be controlled by requiring compliance with a work practice standard. Work practices should be initiated when an employee is exposed continuously for one hour or intermittently for two hours and the Wet Bulb Globe Temperature exceeds 79^{o}F for men and 76^{o}F for women. The work practices should insure that the employee's body temperature does not exceed 100.4^{o}F. No employee shall be permitted to work without protective observation at high heat stress levels. Transmitted June 30, 1972.

INORGANIC LEAD—Occupational exposure to inorganic lead shall be controlled so that workers shall not be exposed at a concentration greater than 0.15 mg Pb/m^3 determined as a time-weighted average exposure for an eight-hour workday. This is based on the relationship between airborne lead and the biochemical indices of effect, especially blood lead. Biological monitoring shall be made available to all workers subject to exposure to inorganic lead. It consists of sampling and analysis of whole blood, or alternatively, of urine for lead content. Unacceptable absorption of lead posing a risk of lead poisoning is demonstrated at levels of 0.080 mg Pb/100 g of whole blood or greater, or at levels of 0.20 mg Pb/liter of urine (with urine specific gravity corrected to 1.024) or greater. Transmitted January 5, 1973.

INORGANIC MERCURY—Occupational exposure to mercury shall be controlled so that workers are not exposed at a concentration greater than 0.05 mg Hg/cu m determined as a time-weighted average exposure for an eight-hour workday. Inorganic mercury includes elemental mercury, and all inorganic mercury compounds and organic mercury compounds other than ethyl and methyl mercury compounds. Employers shall monitor environmental levels of inorganic mercury at least every six months. Transmitted August 13, 1973. Contractor: Tabershaw-Cooper Associates.

NOISE—A maximum exposure of 85 dBA is recommended, but the effective date is deferred pending an extensive feasibility study and limitation of mandatory audiometric testing to new employees, along with a recommendation that employers consider the merits of a full hearing conservation program. A study of the quantity and quality of the health manpower for audiometric testing is needed before further recommendations can be made. The present Federal standard is 90 dBA. Transmitted August 10, 1972.

SULFUR DIOXIDE—Occupational exposure to sulfur dioxide shall be controlled so that workers shall not be exposed to concentrations greater than 2 ppm of air (5 milligrams per cubic meter of air) for an eight-hour work day. Medical exams shall emphasize the eyes and cardiopulmonary system, with particular attention focused on complaints of mucous membrane irritation and cough. Transmitted February 11, 1974. Contractor: Tabershaw-Cooper Associates.

TOLUENE—Occupational exposure to toluene shall be controlled so that workers shall not be exposed at a concentration greater than 100 ppm of air (375 milligrams per cubic meter of air) for eight-hour day, with a ceiling of 200 ppm (750 milligrams) as determined by a sampling time of 10 minutes. Smoking shall be prohibited in all areas where there is toluene. If exposure to other chemicals also occurs, for example from contamination of toluene with benzene, provisions of any applicable standard for the other chemicals shall also be followed. Transmitted July 23, 1973. Contractor: George D. Clayton & Assoc.

TOLUENE DIIOSOCYANATE—Occupational exposure to TDI shall be controlled so that no worker shall be exposed to a concentration of more than 0.005 ppm (0.036 mg/cu m) for any eight-hour workday or for any 20-minute period to more than 0.02 ppm (0.14 mg/cu m). Workers already sensitized should not be exposed to any amount of TDI. The standard is based on the effects on the respiratory tract and is designed to prevent acute and chronic irritation and sensitization of workers. Transmitted July 23, 1973. Contractor: Tabershaw-Cooper Associates.

TRICHLOROETHYLENE—Occupational exposure to trichloroethylene shall be controlled so that workers will not be exposed at a concentration in excess of 100 ppm determined for eight-hour workday, as measured by a minimum sampling time of 10 minutes. No worker shall be exposed to a peak concentration in excess of 150 ppm, as measured by a maximum sampling time of 10 minutes. The recommendations would not alter the existing Federal standard but would lower the ceiling to protect workers from eye irritations. Transmitted July 23, 1973. Contractor: George D. Clayton & Assoc.

ULTRAVIOLET RADIATION—Technology to measure ultraviolet energy for compliance with the recommended standard is inadequate, so work practices are recommended. For the ultraviolet spectral region of 315 to 400 nm, total irradiance incident on unprotected skin or eyes, based on either measurement data or on output data, shall not exceed 1.0 mW/cm^2 for periods greater than 1000 seconds, and for exposure times of 1000 seconds or less the total radiant energy shall not exceed 1000 mW sec/cm^2 (1.0 J/cm^2). For the ultraviolet spectral region of 200 to 315 nm, total irradiance is described in a more complex formula in the document. Transmitted December 20, 1972. Contractor: Franklin Institute.

Note: These summaries are obviously incomplete and include only a few of the major highlights in the criteria documents from which they were extracted. The reader is thus invited to consult the full documents, available from NIOSH, for a more complete summary of environmental, medical, housekeeping, record-keeping and other requirements.

EMPLOYEES MUST BE INFORMED WHEN HANDLING HAZARDOUS CHEMICALS:

Marine Terminals Corp., a California stevedoring firm, violated the Occupational Safety and Health Act when it failed to inform a longshoring crew of the general nature of the danger involved in handling a hazardous cargo of toluene diisocyanate (TDI).

This ruling was handed down by the Occupational Safety and Health Review Commission. OSHA had charged the company with (1) failure to inform all employees of the general nature of the hazard the chemical cargo presented and what special precautions should be taken in the event a container was damaged, and (2) failure to secure the cargo drums on pallets to prevent their falling and being damaged, thus leaking noxious fumes. The 12-man crew was loading on board the ship 444 steel drums, each containing 55 gallons, on which were visible warning labels.

The firm contested the charges, claiming that the foreman and two winch operators had been told of the danger and that the other crew members knew the cargo was hazardous because of the warning labels on the drums.

Review Commission Judge James A. Croning, Jr., affirmed the first charge because although labels on the cargo warned of the possible danger and described the cargo's hazardous nature, the employer could not rely upon the workers' reading the labels, but had the specific requirement to inform every employee of the danger and possible effect on their health and safety should the cargo leak from damaged containers. He vacated the second charge, however, because no evidence was presented to show that the loading gear and procedures used presented any danger.

In another precedent-setting case, the Review Commission dismissed an occupational safety charge because OSHA failed to show the firm what it should have done to prevent a fatal accident.

The ruling was handed down in the case of Getter Trucking Co., a Montana heavy hauling firm. One of its employees was killed February 18, 1973, at the scene of a 99-car railroad derailment in Wyoming. The Commission vacated a Labor Department charge that the firm had failed to provide its employees with a work place free from recognized hazards likely to cause death or serious injury.

The case resulted from an investigation by OSHA. The fatality occurred during clean-up operations of the derailment. The firm had 12 employees and six trucks assisting in the clean-up at the wreck near Clearmont, Wyo., when a cable snapped free from under a tractor tread and struck a workman in the stomach. He died two hours later.

OSHA charged that the firm had not taken adequate steps to insure that no employees would be near the wire rope cable and thus had failed in the general duty which all employers have under the law of providing their employees with a safe place of employment. The firm contested the charge. The judge ruled that OSHA had failed to establish a general duty violation because it did not specify the particular steps that should have been taken to avoid the fatality and failed to demonstrate the feasibility and likely utility of any such measures. The Commissioners affirmed the judge's decision.

Among other Review Commission rulings:

* McDevitt and Street Co., the general contractor for the Brown and Williamson Tobacco Company's annex construction project in Petersburg, Va., was found in violation of an OSHA regulation in a case involving the work-related death of a subcontractor's employee killed in a fall from an unenclosed hoist. The Commission's decision found that the violation was serious, thereby reversing an administrative law judge's ruling that characterized the violation as non-serious. While overturning the judge's finding, it upheld his action in reducing the penalty from $650 to $200—the only aspect of the case which the company contested.

* Dela Enterprises, Inc., an Arizona manufacturer of pyrotecthnic and explosive training devices under a contract to supply the Army Picatinny Arsenal in New Jersey, was freed of OSHA charges of violations of the general duty provisions requiring safe work place. Specifically, OSHA charged that the employees were not wearing conductive shoes to prevent a static charge from setting off an explosion and that electrical resistance tests and grounding system tests were not conducted and that safety requirements for the blending operations were not posted. An administrative law judge vacated the charges, ruling that the conditions cited by OSHA were not proved to be recognized hazards.

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* Hoffman Electric Co., Edina, Minn., electrical subcontractor, violated the law when it failed to provide standard guard railings and toe boards on stairwell openings and open-sided floors which exposed its eight employees to possible fall hazards, as charged by OSHA inspectors. The firm contested the citation, disclaiming any responsibility for the hazards because it did not have control of the construction project. The administrative law judge disagreed and affirmed the charges, saying an employer is responsible for the safety of his

employees, regardless of who creates a hazard. The $60 penalty sought by OSHA was assessed.

* Cedar Craft Co., Norman, Ida., had penalties reduced from $1,200 to $195 because its management made a "good faith" effort to comply with OSHA even though it was guilty of four safety violations regarding Federal regulations on machine safety guarding. It has eight employees and manufacturers posts, rails and pickets. It was charged with failure to provide guards at the point of operation on a log splitter, a rail splitter and a picket splitter. Representatives of the firm attended an OSHA seminar, developed a safety program, provided operator instruction, purchased safety equipment and promptly corrected all unsafe conditions. This was deemed enough to justify the penalty reduction.

CEQ HEAD CALLS FOR MORE OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH RESEARCH:

Russell W. Peterson, chairman of the President's Council on Environmental Quality, has called for new emphasis on additional research in occupational health because, as he said, "it should be recognized that most environmental health problems are first discovered in occupationally exposed groups."

"This fact emphasizes the extreme hazards existing in the workplace environment and the need for strong protective measures," Peterson told the Institute of Environmental Sciences in Washington.

He cited vinyl chloride and asbestos as examples of recent agents which have been found to be toxic in the environment and to have had their antecedents in the workplace.

"The length of the latency period and the likelihood of a cancerous response to the chemical appear to be related to the level of exposure of the individual," Peterson said. "Because the vast preponderance of vinyl chloride has been produced within the last 15 years, it can be anticipated that more angiosarcomas are likely to develop in workers exposed to this chemical."

He was sharply critical of the role of Reserve Mining Co. for what he said was ignoring the health hazard involved in disposing of taconite wastes in Lake Superior.

"Because Reserve's plant has been in operation only 18 years, and at the current high level of production for an even shorter period, the carcinogenic latency period has not expired. It may be 10 years before the magnitude of this problem will be known and, unfortunately, the finding will be based largely upon the fate of over 200,000 people exposed to asbestos dumped into the source of their drinking water by the Reserve plant."

LABOR DEPT. WORKING ON SAFETY STANDARD FOR MARINE TERMINAL OPERATIONS:

The Labor Department is currently developing the first comprehensive safety standard covering marine terminal operations and is expected to be ready for public hearings later this year, thus extending coverage to longshoremen in dock areas as well as aboard ships in port.

This was revealed by Secretary of Labor Peter J. Brennan in an address to the Port of Philadelphia Maritime Society. The standard is being developed under the authority of amendments to the Longshoremen's and Harbor Workers Compensation Act.

The Department is also in the process of developing guidelines concerning the extension of workmen's compensation coverage to docks and other shoreside operations, Brennan said. Maximum weekly benefits are currently $210. There will be two further increases, until the target of 200 percent of the national average weekly wage is reached in 1975, Brennan said.

PEOPLE WITH LOWER BLOOD PRESSURE CAN HAVE INSURANCE PREMIUMS CUT:

Individuals with high blood pressure who are paying more for life and health insurance may be able to reduce their premiums if their blood pressure is demonstrably lower when they apply for a new rating, according to a booklet, "The Underwriting Significance of Hypertension for the Life Insurance Industry," prepared by the National Heart and Lung Institute.

HEW Secretary Caspar Weinberger also noted the results of a survey conducted by Louis Harris & Associates, for NHLI. Among other things, the survey found that physicians and clinics were primary sources of health information and that practically all of the subjects had had their blood pressure checked at one time.

But the survey also showed that the consequences of uncontrolled hypertension and the potential value of preventive measures were not perceived. Nor were more than half the subjects convinced that hypertension could often be present without producing obvious symptoms.

May has been designated as High Blood Pressure Month, sponsored by HEW, the American Heart Association, the American Medical Association, the National Medical Association and the Citizens for the Treatment of High Blood Pressure.

MSA APPOINTED DISTRIBUTOR FOR DU PONT AUDIO DOSIMETER PRODUCTS:

Mine Safety Appliances Co., Pittsburgh, has been appointed worldwide distributor for the Du Pont Company's audio dosimeter product line. MSA, the world's largest safety equipment manufacturer and distributor, will market the D-100, D-285 and E-100 audio dosimeters throughout the world.

The Du Pont audio dosimeter continuously monitors an employee's noise exposure throughout the workday and records it on a small memory cell. The cell is removed from the dosimeter at the end of the day and is inserted in a separate desktop device. Within seconds, the readout displays the exposure level as a percentage of the total noise dose allowed. The memory cell is then ready for re-use.

NASA HAS JOB OPENINGS FOR LIFE SCIENCES PERSONNEL:

NASA is currently accepting nominations from colleges and universities of faculty members to fill temporary assignments in life sciences programs at the Johnson Space Center in Houston and Ames Research Center, Moffett Field, Calif.

Appropriately qualified personnel will spend about a year in special studies and/or receive experience in space flight related aspects of life sciences.

Nominees should be experienced scientific investigators with approximately six years or more of post-doctoral experience and must possess a continuing faculty appointment to which they will return.

At Johnson Space Center openings are available in cardiology/cardiovascular physiology and in neurophysiology. At Ames openings are available in human vestibular physiology, cardiovascular/vestibular research, and in chemistry or biochemistry.

Program participants will be selected from nominations by the NASA Director for Life Sciences and will be formally contacted through their respective colleges or universities. Terms of the assignments will be negotiated by NASA and the respective institutions. Participants will receive salary, travel and change of station expenses or a per diem allowance during the period of assignment.

Nominations should be submitted by the institution to Director, Office of University Affairs, Code PY, NASA Headquarters, Washington, D.C. 20546. Nominations should be in by May 31 and individuals will be considered for selection by July 1. Additional information may be obtained from H.S. Brownstein, Director, Program Planning and Control, Office of NASA Director for Life Sciences, Washington, D.C. 20546.

GE PAYMENT POLICY ON PREGNANCY CALLED ILLEGAL:

A Federal judge in Richmond, Va., has ruled that General Electric Co.'s policy of withholding sickness and accident benefits from pregnant employees is a violation of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

The ruling by Judge Robert R. Merhige, Jr. in a class action lawsuit challenging the disability payment policy affects about 100,000 employees at GE plants in the United States. It could also set a general precedent throughout industry.

He ruled that the company's policy constituted sexual discrimination and barred GE from withholding weekly disability benefits in connection with work absences related to pregnancy. The female employees should receive disability payments just as males, he ruled.

The judge noted that GE received 5,500 claims in 1971 for sickness and accident benefits from women absent because of pregnancy.

Under its policy, GE pays medical and surgical expenses relating to pregnancy but does not reimburse female employees for the time they lose from work because of childbirth. The company contends that pregnancy was not a disability illness under the terms of its insurance program.