

FILE NAME: Johns-Manville (JMA)

DATE: 1971 July

DOC#: JMA041

DOCUMENT DESCRIPTION: Report - Wear and Brushing Tests of
Asbestos-Containing Cloth Coat

**JOHNS-MANVILLE RESEARCH
AND ENGINEERING CENTER**

Memorandum: M404-80

Date July 12, 1971

WEAR AND BRUSHING TESTS OF ASBESTOS-CONTAINING CLOTH COAT

Tuscany Fabrics Company of New York imported several years ago a large quantity of cloth containing 8 per cent chrysotile. This material was used primarily for the manufacture of low cost coats and jackets. The circumstances surrounding this situation have been outlined in previous letters. Due to the wide publicity, both in the newspapers and television, FDA requested HEW to evaluate the potential release of fibers from these coats under accelerated wear conditions, in simulated tests, carrying a baby, and in dry cleaning.

We have cooperated with Dr. Lewis Cralley of HEW, Cincinnati, in performing these tests and actually have duplicated the tests performed at Cincinnati. Preliminary results have been reported in the following correspondence:

1. S. Speil Memo for File dated June 21, 1971
2. A. F. Burns Memo for File dated June 25, 1971
3. A. F. Burns Memo for File dated July 2, 1971
4. S. Speil Memo for File dated July 7, 1971

The additional results obtained to date do not change the conclusions of my Memo for File of July 7. However, the high fiber counts obtained by brushing a man's jacket made of a conventional fiber blend not containing asbestos, but which was dry cleaned in the same clothes batch with the asbestos-containing coat, may be a serious matter insofar as FDA is concerned. In effect, the fiber counts were as high when brushing a jacket cleaned with the coat as in brushing the asbestos-containing coat itself.

This memorandum will summarize all data obtained to date, including J-M fiber counts on pieces of the filters used in the HEW tests and counted. Any subsequent data obtained on this program will be reported as a supplement to this memorandum.

Speil
S. Speil

SS/rs

Attachment

(distribution reverse side)

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AND ENGINEERING CENTER**

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Date July 12, 1971

WEAR AND BRUSHING TESTS OF ASBESTOS-CONTAINING CLOTH COAT

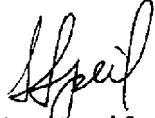
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S. Speil

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APPENDIX

ASBESTOS-CONTAINING CLOTH COAT TESTS
Fiber Count Summary

	<u>Tests Performed at</u> HEW, Cincinnati* <u>Fibers/cc</u>		<u>Tests Performed</u> at J-M, REC** <u>Fibers/cc</u>
	<u>Count by HEW</u> <u>Personnel***</u>	<u>Count by J-M</u> <u>Personnel***</u>	
<u>WEAR TEST NO. 1</u>			
Background control	0 ⁽¹⁾	< 0.03	0.13 ⁽²⁾
Subject personal sampler			
30-minute average	1.8	1.0	0.29
60-minute average	2.3	1.15	0.22
General area samplers, 1/2 hr			
Area near coat rack ⁽³⁾	ND		0.41
Area away from coat rack ⁽⁴⁾	ND		0.27
General area samplers, 1 hr			
Area near coat rack	2.1	0.6	0.35
Area away from coat rack	1.4	0.6	0.18
<u>BABY TEST NO. 1 - 30 minutes</u>			
Background control	ND		0.17
Subject personal sampler, mother	ND		0.27
Baby breathing zone	0.9	0.6	-- ⁽⁵⁾
General area samplers			
Area near coat rack	0.5	0.5	0.15
Area away from coat rack	0.5	0.2	0.09

NOTES:

1. HEW values given to nearest tenth.
2. J-M values given to two places, but reliable only to first place.
3. Sampler parallel to 4-ft wall (refer to diagram attached).
4. Sampler parallel to 6-ft wall (refer to diagram attached).
5. Test no good; sampler cap not removed.

*Results received by phone from Bob Weidner, HEW.

**Results received from J-M report dated June 30, 1971. (Hindmarch to Speil

***These counts were made on the same 35 mm filter. Original counts were made at HEW by HEW personnel. A small section of the filter was sent to J-M for counting at REC by Ed Bulava, Industrial Hygienist.

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	Tests Performed at HEW, Cincinnati <u>Fibers/cc</u>		Tests Performed at J-M, REC <u>Fibers/cc</u>
	<u>Count by HEW Personnel</u>	<u>Count by J-M Personnel</u>	
<u>WEAR TEST NO. 2</u>			
Background control avg of two samples	0.15	0.1	0.20
Subject personal sampler 30-minute average	1.4	0.6	0.88
60-minute average	1.8	0.7	0.65
General area samplers, 1/2 hr			
Area near coat rack	ND		0.54
Area away from coat rack	ND		0.27
General area samplers, 1 hr			
Area near coat rack	1.1	0.9	0.40
Area away from coat rack	0.6	0.6	0.27
<u>BABY TEST NO. 2 - 30 minutes</u>			
Background control	ND		0.15
Subject personal sampler	ND		0.14
Baby breathing zone	0.3	0.2	0.58
General area samplers			
Area near coat rack	0.3	0.5	0.29
Area away from coat rack	0.5	0.5	--(5)
<u>BRUSHING TEST</u>			
Background control	ND		0.13
2-minute test:			
Breathing zone of brusher	2.3	12.1 ⁽⁶⁾	1.8
Adjacent to coat at brushing zone	11.3	6.4 ⁽⁶⁾	4.1
General area samplers			
Area near coat rack	2.3	2.4	6.3
Area away from coat rack			4.5

Note:

6. There is a possibility that these two filters were inadvertently mislabeled when sent to REC.

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	Tests Performed at HEW, Cincinnati <u>Fibers/cc</u>		Tests Performed at J-M, REC <u>Fibers/cc</u>
	<u>Count by HEW Personnel</u>	<u>Count by J-M Personnel</u>	
<u>BRUSHING TEST</u>			
5-minute test:			
Breathing zone of brusher	3.6	1.9	2.5
Adjacent to coat at brushing zone	10.0	2.9	5.3
General area samplers			
Area near coat rack	4.5	2.9	1.6
Area away from coat rack			0.8

DRY CLEANING

The dry cleaning test consisted of three separate operations--two washings and one extraction with approximately four gallons of new perchlorethylene used in each operation. Aliquot samples of the solvent were filtered after each operation with the following results.

New solvent	0
Solvent after first washing	1.6×10^6 fiber/cc of solvent
New solvent after second washing	1.1×10^6 fiber/cc of solvent
New solvent after extraction	1.1×10^6 fiber/cc of solvent

In addition, two men's sport jackets and three pairs of trousers were included in the wash batch with the asbestos-containing coat. A brushing test was performed on one of the jackets with the following results.

BRUSHING TEST OF NON-ASBESTOS CONTAINING JACKET

2-minute whisk broom test:			
Breathing zone of brusher	4.5	2.4	2.1
Adjacent to coat at brushing zone	4.5	7.3	8.2
General area samplers			
Area near coat rack	4.5	4.8	3.6
Area away from coat rack			1.8

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	<u>Tests Performed at HEW, Cincinnati Fibers/cc</u>		<u>Tests Performed at J-M, REC Fibers/cc</u>
	<u>Count by HEW Personnel</u>	<u>Count by J-M Personnel</u>	
<u>BRUSHING TEST OF NON-ASBESTOS CONTAINING JACKET</u>			
5-minute whisk broom test:			
Breathing zone of brusher	4.5	5.8	5.8
Adjacent to coat at brushing zone	5.4	8.7	7.4
General area samplers			
Area near coat rack	3.6	1.9	3.1
Area away from coat rack			3.1

REPETITION OF ORIGINAL TESTS ON COAT AFTER DRY CLEANING

WEAR TEST NO. 1

Subject personal sampler			
30-minute average	0.5	0.8	J-M results
60-minute average	0.7	0.55	to be reported
General area samplers,			at later date
1 hr			
Area near coat rack	0.5	0.6	
Area away from coat rack	0.5	0.2	

BABY TEST NO. 1 - 30 minutes

Baby breathing zone	0.5	0.3
General area samplers		
Area near coat rack	0.2	0.3
Area away from coat rack	0.2	0.3

BRUSHING TEST:

At HEW, this was performed immediately after the baby test rather than at the conclusion of all testing as previously. At J-M, it was performed at conclusion of all tests.

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**JOHNS-MANVILLE RESEARCH
AND ENGINEERING CENTER**

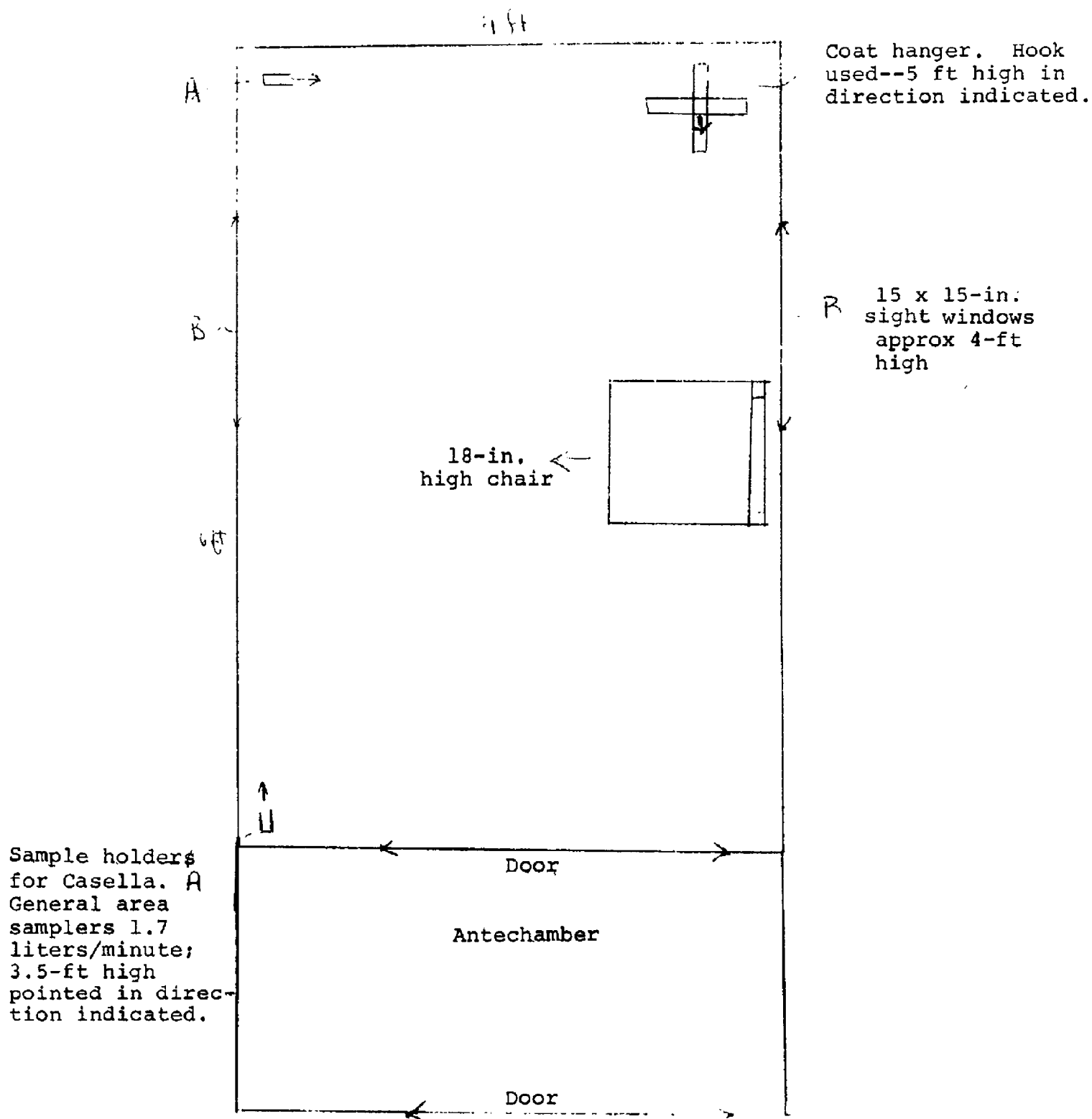
Memorandum M404-80

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	Tests Performed at HEW, Cincinnati <u>Fibers/cc</u>		Tests Performed at J-M, REC <u>Fibers/cc</u>
	<u>Count by HEW Personnel</u>	<u>Count by J-M Personnel</u>	
<u>BRUSHING TEST</u>			
2-minute test:			
Breathing zone of brusher	4.5	2.4	J-M results
Adjacent to coat at brushing zone	6.8	7.3	to be reported
General area sampler			at later date.
Area near coat rack	2.3	4.8	
Area away from coat rack			
5-minute test:			
Breathing zone of brusher	3.6	1.0	
Adjacent to coat at brushing zone	3.6	4.8	
General area sampler			
Area near coat rack	1.8	2.9	
Area away from coat rack			
<u>WEAR TEST NO. 2</u>			
Subject personal sampler			
30-minute average	1.2	0.3	
60-minute average	1.4	0.3	
General area samplers, 1 hr			
Area near coat rack	0.6	0.6	
Area away from coat rack	1.0	0.4	
<u>BABY TEST NO. 2 - 30 minutes</u>			
Baby breathing zone	0.5	0.8	
General area samplers			
Area near coat rack	0.3	0.2	
Area away from coat rack	0.8	0.2	

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ENVIRONMENTAL CHAMBER FOR COAT WEAR TESTS
4 x 6 x 8-FT HIGH



No Action on Asbestos Coats; 100,000 Face Cancer Threat

Federal health and environmental officials have been notified that more than 100,000 women's coats containing 7.8 per cent asbestos fibers have been marketed in this country, but since they were apprised of this situation on April 16, no action has been taken to halt the manufacture and sale of the hazardous garments.

A letter was sent to Mrs. Virginia Knauer, Special Assistant to the President for Consumer Affairs, with copies going to U. S. Surgeon General Jesse L. Steinfeld, M.D., and Environmental Protection Administration chief William D. Ruckelshaus, by the head of

Lab tests on coat show brushing raises asbestos levels in the air to 10,000 times the normal concentration.

the Department of Environmental Medicine at the City University of New York's Mount Sinai School of Medicine, Irving J. Selikoff, M.D.

"The Nation's Health" queried the Food and Drug Administration on May 25 as to what action is being taken by the agency, and was told that studies of the situation are being contemplated. The FDA spokesman added that the agency has no more information on the coats than Dr. Selikoff does.

In the letters, Dr. Selikoff noted that "Health hazards associated with exposure to asbestos have become of increasing concern, especially because of the serious cancer-causing potential . . . The manufacture, distribution, and use of this product have important health implications for workers, consumers, and perhaps the community at large. We are calling this to your attention so that appropriate steps

may be taken to protect the public."

The severe hazards of occupational exposure to asbestos have long been known—in a group of asbestos workers, one in ten deaths has been from asbestosis, one in five from lung cancer, and one in ten from mesothelioma. Mesothelioma, a cancer of the lining of the chest or abdomen, is so rare in the general population that perhaps as few as one in 10,000

Asbestos Coat Advice: 'Bury It!'

(continued from page 1)

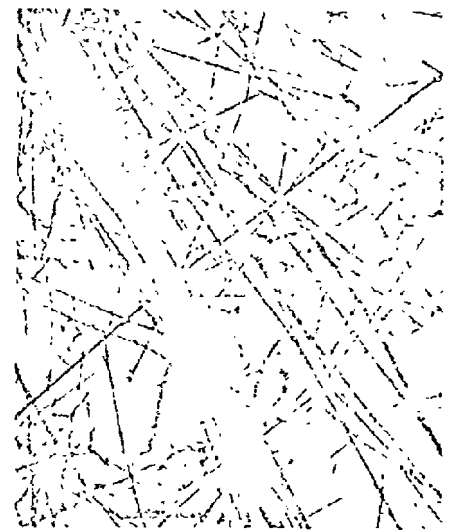
deaths result from it, Dr. Selikoff said.

Of greater relevance to the present situation are the numerous reports that low environmental exposure to asbestos may produce serious disease. In recent years, residents of asbestos mining areas and people living or working near the manufacture or use of asbestos products have developed mesothelioma.

Dr. Selikoff also notified Henoch Mendelsund, a Vice President of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union, who subsequently said that an order has gone out to union members not to cut or sew cloth containing asbestos. Mr. Mendelsund also said that the union will demand that Congress ban asbestos and other dangerous substances in clothing.

Current labelling laws require that a manufacturer list the contents of a fabric if each of the constituent materials makes up five per cent of it. Consumers can protect themselves by refusing to buy products containing asbestos, but in view of the fact that asbestos is dangerous in any amount, Mr. Mendelsund added, "We are looking toward the change of that provision of the law as far as asbestos is concerned—its presence indicated regardless of the amount . . ."

"Asbestos particles, so minute that tens of millions of them would fit on the head of a pin, settle in the lungs when inhaled and remain there. They



Chrysotile Asbestos fibers found in coat, magnified 20,000 times through an electron microscope.

do not dissolve. They may cause lung cancer, respiratory insufficiency, and other major ailments," Dr. Selikoff stated.

He went on to say that brushing or rubbing a coat of this material produced asbestos levels in the air 10,000 times the normal concentration. "I would not want a woman to hold a baby against a cloth of this type," he said.

He added that the asbestos was a greater danger to workers handling the material than to consumers wearing it, but when asked what owners of the material should do, Dr. Selikoff said, "If you have that coat, bury it."

SAINT LUKE'S HOSPITAL

11311 OHAKER BOULEVARD
CLEVELAND, OHIO 44104

Coats

DIVISION OF MEDICINE

216-791-1000

August 5, 1971.

Denis J. McGrath, M.D.
Bureau of Product Safety
Department of Health,
Education and Welfare
P. O. Box 8208, S.W. Station
Washington, D.C. 20024

Dear Dr. McGrath:

The following expresses the opinion of the group of scientists assembled by you on July 9, 1971, to consider the possible hazard to the public posed by manufacture, sale, and use of coats containing a blend of wool, synthetic and asbestos yarn or thread. The asbestos used was the variety known as chrysotile, and comprised 8% of the coat's fabric.

It is possible for asbestos fibers to be dislodged from this cloth by physical handling. Such air-borne fibers could be of respirable size and thus gain access to the lungs of those using the coats, as well as those nearby. With this in mind, the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health carried out quantitative tests of release of asbestos fiber during wear, brushing, dry cleaning, and physical contact of the skin with the fabric of these coats. The tests were deliberately designed to be many orders of magnitude more severe in terms of applying energy to the garments than would be expected in ordinary usage by the public. For example, the coats were taken off, thrown across a chair or hung up and then put on again approximately 125 times in one hour in a room only 4'x6'x8' in size. Not only was more energy than usual applied to the coats, but a build up of air-borne fibers was encouraged. Brushing of the coats was vigorous and carried out for two to five minutes continuously in each study.

The data obtained during these tests are available to you and will not be repeated here. Under conditions far more severe than would occur in normal use, the fiber concentrations were nearly all below the threshold limit values* currently set for occupational exposures. These define average concentrations of airborne asbestos

* 1970 Interim TLV proposed by the ACGIH for asbestos:
5 fibers greater than 5 microns long per milliliter.
A concentration of more than 5 fibers, not to exceed
10, may be permitted for up to 15 minute periods each
hour up to 5 times daily.

J. McGrath, M.D.

August 5, 1971

fibers in which it is anticipated that individuals can work for many years without undue risk. When we consider exposure to concentrations of airborne asbestos fiber as recorded by the NIOSH tests for the relatively short and intermittent periods customary in the normal utilization of coats, as contrasted with a working lifetime at the TLV levels, there appears to be a wide margin of safety. The consensus of our group therefore, was that this single episode of manufacture and sale of asbestos-containing garments did not constitute an "imminent hazard" as defined by the Food and Drug Administration, and that a recommendation to recover all the garments from the individual purchasers was not warranted.

Our group does believe that this episode of using asbestos in garments for the general public should never be permitted again. There are strong reasons supporting this attitude. We are aware that there is a background of asbestos fibers of respirable size in the ambient air, to which individuals are exposed from birth to death. Asbestos fibers in various quantities are demonstrable in the lungs of nearly all adults; those who have worked in "asbestos-using occupations" have many times more than those who have not been thus employed. In most adults therefore, there is a tissue pool of fibers to which the background in the ambient air continuously contributes. While this background of fiber originates and is sustained in part from weathering of rock and soil containing asbestos, it is contributed to, in some measure, by the production, manufacture, and use of asbestos products. The majority of these products make a unique and important contribution to the safety and welfare of the public, and in this sense justify their role in contributing to a low background of ambient air asbestos fibers. There is no clearcut evidence, with respect to chrysotile, that retention of asbestos fiber in the lungs of those not occupationally exposed is associated with an excess of those lung abnormalities known to be related occupationally to asbestos. Nevertheless, it does not appear prudent to us to countenance an addition of asbestos fiber to the air of the public when the product involved represents a totally inappropriate use of asbestos fiber, one in which none of the special properties of the fiber than contribute to the welfare of the public are utilized.

We strongly recommend that a mechanism be developed to forbid the use of asbestos yarn in garments manufactured for wear by the general public. Moreover, to the degree that it is feasible, we recommend removal of unsold coats and unused asbestos containing fabric which might be used in coats of this kind, from the market place.

Respectfully submitted,

W. Clark Cooper, M.D.
Lewis Cralley, Ph.D.
Benjamin G. Ferris, M.D.
Paul Cross, M.D.
George W. Wright, M.D. (Chairman)

EDITORIAL REQUEST

DATE: June 21CALLER: Irene HoroshakPUBLICATION: MEDICAL WORLD NEWSPHONE NO: (312) Midway 3- 5644

WANTED TO KNOW:

She had read the story on "asbestos in women's coats" in THE NATION'S HEALTH and wanted to do an article for MEDICAL WORLD NEWS on the problem. She said she had already talked to Dr. Selikoff and he recommended that she call J-M for an industry viewpoint.

DISPOSITION OF REQUEST:

I gave Mrs. Horoshak basically the same information, and in the same manner, as I gave to the writer from WNBC-TV. I told her about the customs battle between the domestic textile manufacturers and the importers, the manner in which J-M became involved in the situation, the decision by the Food & Drug Administration not to rely on Dr. Selikoff's figures but to conduct tests of their own, etc.

I was careful to point out my sources of information in each case so that she would not get the idea that I was giving her J-M's opinions or evaluations.

I further told her that J-M's only interest in the matter was because of the health claims being made against the coats. I explained that neither the fabric nor the asbestos used in the manufacturing process were J-M produced or mined. I told her that J-M, being the largest asbestos miner in the free world, has a general policy of investigating any alleged health hazards connected with asbestos, even if the asbestos is not produced by us or if the product under attack is not manufactured by J-M.

She then asked if I knew anything about a charge of deceptive labeling. Apparently she had learned from someone (she did not say who) that the Federal Trade Commission was considering a suit against Tuscan Fabrics for not listing asbestos on the coat label as a constituent element in the garments (Rifkin called me on Wednesday to say that he had been contacted by the FTC with the same complaint, and he couldn't understand why). I told Mrs. Horoshak that, to the best of my understanding, the coats were all properly labeled. I explained that I had been told by the FTC that any element in a coat which constitutes more than 5 per cent of the total volume of the coat must be on the label. Since the coats in question contain around 8 per cent asbestos, it should be on the label. I further explained that it was after reading the label that a couple of women called Dr. Selikoff to ask him if the coats were dangerous. She told me that he had told her that too, which was why she was trying to find out more about the deceptive labeling charge because it didn't seem to make much sense to her either.

Because I had earlier in the day received from Sid Speil over the phone the first results of Dr. Gralley's tests on the coat, I did not tell Mrs. Horoshak that we

believed the results of the government testing program would show the coats to be harmless. I told her instead that we would be interested in seeing the test results when they were available. She did not ask me what J-M's position would be if the tests proved positive.

Again, as with the writer from WNBC-TV, I tried to give Mrs. Horoshak the impression (without saying so directly) that asbestos was being used as a bludgeon in the battle between the domestic textile manufacturers and the importers, and that the health question, at least in their minds, was of a secondary nature.

She told me that she was must grateful to me for giving her a blow-by-blow account of the entire controversy, and that it would make the writing of her story that much easier.

Matthew M. Swetonic:

CC: W. P. Raines
F. J. Solon, Jr.
H. M. Jackson
Dr. S. Spoil
Carl Thompson -- Hill & Knowlton
Jim Callaghan -- Hill & Knowlton

ASBESTOS COAT STORY

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Asbestos Information Association/North America

201 East 42nd Street
New York, N. Y. 10017
(212) 697-5600

June 18, 1971

TO: Board of Directors, AIA/NA
and
Administrative Sub-Committee, AIA/NA

cc: J-M Policy Committee

Dr. S. Speil

Dr. J. Leineweber

H. M. Jackson

C. L. Sheckler ←

Gentlemen:

Memos on the "asbestos in women's coats" controversy were distributed to you on May 4 and on May 27. Recent developments in this matter require yet another updating.

As you recall from my May 27 memo, the original plans worked out with the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) and the Federal Food and Drug Administration (FDA) were that Johns-Manville would conduct normal wear tests for the government on the coat obtained by J-M from Tuscany Fabrics Inc., (the importer of the cloth). The testing procedures were to be decided upon by the FDA in conjunction with Dr. Lewis Cralley of the U. S. Public Health Service.

On June 2 we learned from Dr. Cralley that the FDA was concerned that the results of the tests, if conducted by Johns-Manville, might be considered suspect in some circles. As a result, the FDA wanted Dr. Cralley to run the tests rather than J-M. We were subsequently asked by the FDA to give our coat to Dr. Cralley for testing. In a telephone conversation with officials of the FDA and the FTC on June 4, I explained that J-M had received its coat from Tuscany Fabrics on the basis that J-M would conduct its own tests, and that as a result we felt obligated to honor this agreement and could therefore not release our coat to the government. I offered to contact Mr. Rifkin, the President of Tuscany Fabrics, for the purpose of obtaining another coat for the government testing program. This was arranged and a coat placed into the hands of the FDA by Mr. Rifkin on June 7.

Present plans are that when Dr. Cralley has received the coat from the FDA, J-M's Dr. Sidney Speil will fly to Cincinnati to observe in detail the testing procedures agreed upon by the FDA and the Public Health Service. These procedures will then be duplicated for the J-M testing program. We have a general idea of most of the tests in the government program, and it appears highly unlikely that the procedures they have selected will demonstrate a significant release of respirable-sized asbestos fibers from the coat.

It is important that the government and J-M tests be completed as soon as possible and the results made public for the adverse publicity being generated by this controversy in growing all the time.

The June issue of THE NATION'S HEALTH, a publication of the American Public Health Association (an organization of 26,000 health professionals -- doctors, nurses, hospital administrators, etc. -- of which approximately half are federal, state and city employees), carried a front page story and an editorial (both attached) on the controversy. THE NATION'S HEALTH attacked the Federal Government for not acting quicker on the letters of warning sent to various Federal agencies by Dr. Selikoff in mid-April.

Newspaper stories based on THE NATION'S HEALTH article have thus far appeared in THE NEW YORK TIMES, THE NEW YORK POST, THE NEWARK STAR-LEDGER, THE WASHINGTON POST, THE WASHINGTON SUNDAY STAR and THE DENVER POST. The AP also carried the story, and if past experience with the coat controversy is any indication, we can expect to receive a hundred or more clippings on the subject from around the country over the next few weeks. Attached are copies of the AP story, as printed in the NEWARK STAR-LEDGER, and THE NEW YORK TIMES article, as reprinted in THE DENVER POST.

On June 8, J-M was contacted by William Wilt, a writer for WNBC-TV in New York, regarding a TV editorial on the coat hazard that he was preparing for showing later in the week. Bill Raines talked to him over the phone and I went up to NBC to speak with him in person. As a result of our discussions with Wilt, the planned editorial has been postponed at least until after the government test results are available. A detailed report on our contacts with Wilt is attached.

Since the women's coat controversy first burst on the asbestos-health scene about six weeks ago, it has grown into a major problem for the industry. While none of the AIA/NA member companies, to the best of our knowledge, has any financial interest in this matter, the fact that so innocuous a use of asbestos is being questioned will, if unchecked, inevitably lead to similar health questions being raised about other uses of the material, such as perhaps in floor tile, siding materials, etc. We have seen what can happen along these lines in the case of sprayed asbestos, where the possible relationship between asbestos and disease does not strike so close to home as in the case of these coats.

Should the test results on the coats prove positive, and the FDA order a recall of all those garments already sold, the resultant adverse publicity could be disastrous to our informational efforts, for it would in essence place the Federal government on record as accepting the proposition that even minute amounts of asbestos constitute a public health hazard.

In the past six weeks, we have seen more clips on the women's coats controversy than we have seen on sprayed asbestos over the past two years. This leads to the very real possibility that the FDA or the FTC could be forced by public or media pressure into taking a hard stand on the coats, no matter what the test results show, or even before the test results are available.

Unfortunately there is little more in this area that the AIA/NA can do until the government test results are in -- we have already established good working relationships with those people in the FTC and the FDA who are investigating the situation --- however, should the American public come to accept the proposition that a certain coat in their closet is capable of giving them cancer, then our job of convincing people that asbestos-containing brake linings or roofing shingles are perfectly safe will become all that much harder, if not impossible.

Additional reports on this developing situation will be distributed as required.

Very truly yours,



Matthew M. Swentonic
Coordinator,
Special Projects

ci-12

Asbestos Fabric Danger Ignored

More than 100,000 women now own coats which contain dangerous amounts of asbestos fibers (see page 1). The health hazard is clear. Yet, six weeks after the Special Assistant to the President for Consumer Affairs, the Surgeon General, and the Director of the Environmental Protection Agency had been notified by an eminent scientist of this health hazard, nothing had been done to inform the public or stop the importation and use of the hazardous fabric.

If a request for a reduced import duty on the 7.8 per cent asbestos fabric had not been made to the Customs Court and the denial of the request printed in the press, this health hazard might still be undetected.

The APHA urges action now to prevent future importation or manufacture of consumer products containing asbestos, public education on the dangers to those now wearing the 100,000 manufactured coats, removal from the market of any unsold garments, and reimbursement by the manufacturer to those who have purchased the unsafe coats.

Most importantly, procedures for surveillance and cooperation between government agencies must be established. Private citizens should not have to act for the government and when health hazards are discovered, the appropriate federal agency should be prepared to quickly evaluate the evidence and act.