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March 9, 1981

REPLY TO: George E. Symons, PhD.
86 Edgewood Avenue
Larchmont, NY 10538

TO: Committee Members
Ad Hoc Committee on Asbestos in Water

In my last transmittal, I did not include a copy of one comment that approved of the first draft as written; nor did I mention one opinion that AWWA should not issue any such policy statement at this time. I believe that our committee's course lies somewhere between these two extremes.

With the issuance of the first draft, I assumed that the committee members would understand my philosophy: "Nothing ever happens until someone puts words on paper." Draft No. 1 was an organized attempt to include all ideas and suggestions I had received or extracted from published materials; it was not intended as a proposal, per se.

Attached is Draft No. 2 of a policy statement. It has been developed from consideration of all comments received between January 21 and March 11. Draft No. 2 is an effort to compromise all points of view and to do so with an economy of words.

As I have indicated previously, if you did not comment on Draft No. 1, do NOT do so now. If you have any suggestions about revising Draft No. 2, insert them as your proposed wording of Draft No. 3, by (a) making deletions, additions, or text revisions on draft No. 2 or, (b) by submitting new material (or text matter dropped from Draft No. 1) and by indicating the point of insertion of the material in Draft No. 2. Do NOT -- repeat NOT -- submit your arguments or reasons for your suggested changes; save those arguments for the Committee Meeting in St. Louis. DO sign your name to your draft revisions AND send a copy of your revisions to each of the other committee members.

I am setting April 15 for receipt of your proposed revisions to Draft No. 2, after which I shall prepare Draft No. 3 to be mailed to you by May 15.

The date and place of our meeting in St. Louis have not yet been set. Jon DeBoer will let you know.

George E. Symons
George E. Symons

GES/pn
Enclosure

CAPCO JEN 0020485

March 8, 1981

Draft No. 2

AWWA Policy Statement on Asbestos in Drinking Water Supplies

In 1981, it is apparent that some of the water-consuming public has become increasingly alarmed about the possible health effects of asbestos in drinking water. For this reason, the American Water Works Association believes it is appropriate to express a policy with respect to educating the public and recommending actions on the part of water utilities concerning the subject.

As a prelude to establishing a policy on the matter, the American Water Works Association has considered and evaluated certain known facts on the subject to wit:

Asbestos is a naturally-occurring mineral in the earth's crust and may be found in surface and groundwater sources used for drinking water supplies; asbestos may enter water used for drinking by contact with asbestos-containing materials used in water supply systems, particularly where the water may be characterized as aggressive.

Although scientific studies have shown that inhalation of air-borne asbestos fibers has produced cancers in human beings, there is no epidemiological evidence that the results of these studies may be extrapolated to determine physiological effects on humans who ingest asbestos particles in drinking water. Furthermore,

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there are no definitive research data which indicate that ingestion of water-borne asbestos fibers by human beings is inimical to human health.

Treatment of water by filtration significantly reduces the number of asbestos fibers in water supplied to the consumer; treatment of water to reduce its aggressive characteristics will reduce the tendency of asbestos to be leached from asbestos-containing materials in contact with the water; and surface treatment of asbestos-containing materials before use or after cleaning will reduce the leaching effect of aggressive waters on asbestos-containing material.

At the present time, no governmental regulations exist regarding prescribed maximum allowable concentrations of asbestos fibers in drinking water, or for the adjustment of the aggressive characteristics of water to be carried in asbestos-cement pipe.

In consideration of these factors, the American Water Works Association believes that it has a responsibility to keep its members abreast of new information as it becomes available on the subject of asbestos in water. Furthermore, until definitive data are available on the subject or until government standards are promulgated, water utilities have a responsibility to their customers to be fully aware

of the local situation with respect to asbestos in the water. Where the asbestos fiber content may be considered high in relation to maximum permissible levels suggested by current researchers, it is recommended that water utilities give consideration to the adoption of treatment techniques or other actions as may be applicable including filtration; reduction of water aggressiveness, and in-line treatment of pipe to protect against leaching; and adoption of approved procedures for handling, cutting, machining, and tapping of asbestos-cement pipe (See Committee Report on "Use of Asbestos in Water Utility Construction "; JOURNAL AWWA, April 1978, pp 217-219).

Where public concern is evidenced or customer inquiry made about asbestos in the drinking water, every water utility should respond promptly and knowledgeably.

AWWA Believes that research on every controversial subject is desirable and will be fruitful, but until such research on this particular subject definitely establishes a causal relationship between asbestos in drinking water and adverse health effects, restraint should be exercised in the promulgation, adoption, and enforcement of standards and regulations with respect to asbestos in drinking water.