FILE NAME: Owens-Corning (OC)

DATE: 1978 Sept 8

DOC#: OC393

DOCUMENT DESCRIPTION: Report Presented to Employees - The Health Aspects of Asbestos

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Intra-company correspondence

to Dr. J. L. Kohlen - Toledo

from Diane Neeley - Bloomington

date September 8, 1978

subject COMMUNICATION TO FORMER OCF BLOOMINGTON EMPLOYEES

cc: Dr. D. J. Billmaier - Toledo
P. O'N. Brisley - T/E9
P. T. Worley - Bloomington

Attached are two copies of proposed letter to former Bloomington OCF employees who worked in the plant and office between the time OCF acquired the plant and the time the asbestos was moved out of the Bloomington Plant (October 31, 1974). Also attached are two copies of the list of employees involved, giving their last known address. We have made a search of our local telephone directory, as well as the directory covering the small towns around Bloomington.

A copy of this proposed letter has been sent to our plant physician, Dr. James A. Bilyeu, together with a brief explanation of the background.

Diane Neeley

Diane Neeley

DN:if
attachments

PLAINTIFF'S EXHIBIT 134

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The Health Aspects of Asbestos

Presented by Dr. Donald J. Billmaier

For Employees of Owens-Corning's Plant in

Berlin, New Jersey

May, 1978

Within the past two weeks there have been a number of newspaper, magazine and television reports on the subject of asbestos. They resulted from a warning issued by Health, Education and Welfare Department Secretary Joseph A. Califano, Jr. Since many of you were working here when asbestos was used in Kaylo, this warning has naturally been a cause for concern.

Your Plant Manager, Dick Hite, and his boss, Frank Brisley, have asked me to come here and meet with you. I'm representing Owens-Corning's Medical Department, and the purpose of my visit is to try and answer whatever questions you might have about asbestos, the Califano statement, or any other related concern.

In checking through medical records here at the plant I notice a lot of you have been with Owens-Corning much longer than I have. I joined the company in (yr) as (title). Before that I (additional professional background).

One of the reasons I was attracted to Owens-Corning was the company's history of research regarding the health aspects of the work environment and the company's products. The earliest studies of the health aspects of glass fiber materials took place in the 1930s.

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The question then was whether there might be any adverse health affects from fibrous glass. This is important to know because it's the company's stated objective to provide a safe and healthful place in which employees can work.

From time to time we hear claims that there are adverse health affects from fibrous glass, but to date, we have seen no evidence to support those claims. We have perhaps the best opportunity to discover such evidence if it exists, because Owens-Corning's insulation plant in Newark, Ohio has been producing glass fiber materials longer than any other plant in the world. Veteran employees there have been working with the material for some 40 years, and we see no health pattern in that group that is different from the population as a whole.

We've furnished material for studies that compared the health problems of our employees with a comparable sample of citizens from the general population in another city; we've had noted lung experts examine employee x-rays; and we've sponsored a number of laboratory experiments involving animals. The results have always been the same: no evidence of any adverse health affect from fibrous glass.

But asbestos is not fibrous glass. It's a different material altogether, and there is evidence that heavy exposure to asbestos can increase the risk of contracting serious disease.

You probably know more about asbestos than I do, but let me briefly review some background on the material. Asbestos is a fibrous mineral that will not burn. It is mined from the earth; most of it comes from either Canada or Africa.

Asbestos has outstanding insulating capabilities, and its fire resistance makes it especially useful in very high temperature applications. Those properties also make it excellent for use aboard ship, where boilers generate extremely high temperatures, space is at a premium and fire safety a prime consideration.

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As you no doubt noticed in the articles about Califano's statement, most of the people who were exposed to heavy concentrations of asbestos dust had their exposure in World War II shipyards. For example, a number of people from this area were exposed to asbestos in the shipyards at Camden, Gloucester City and Philadelphia. According to the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, between 8 and 11 million Americans may have been exposed to the widely-used mineral since the beginning of World War II.

Asbestos was an important part of Kaylo high temperature insulation ever since the plant was built. As many of you will recall, the plant was acquired from Owens-Illinois by Owens-Corning in 1958. It wasn't until about 10 years later that the health aspects of asbestos began to receive widespread attention.

Why so many years of use before a health problem was noted? Because it is the nature of asbestos-related diseases that they take 15 to 35 years or more to develop.

Owens-Corning's response to the health hazard of asbestos has been two fold. First we reduced the degree of exposure through dust collecting equipment, improved plant ventilation and personal respirators. The second step was removing asbestos from the product. As you all know, there is no asbestos used in the plant today. Our technical people found a way to use glass fibers and other materials, eliminate the use of asbestos, and still achieve the high thermal performance needed by the plant's customers.

Those of you who have worked here for many years I'm sure recognize that giant strides have been made in improving this plant's work environment. Dust collecting equipment and other components of the ventilation system have been steadily improved over the years. Today this plant meets all of the Threshold Limit Value requirements specified by the Occupational Safety and Health Act, commonly referred to as OSHA.

You may be wondering why Secretary Califano is raising the health issue with asbestos at this time. In my judgement, he's carrying out the government's obligation to inform its citizens of matters which may bear directly on their lives. In this case, the Secretary says he recently received word of new studies which demonstrate that asbestos creates a high risk of serious disease for workers who have been heavily exposed to the material.

This concern is nothing new to Owens-Corning or the Berlin Plant. It's the same concern that prompted a meeting like this in 1971. At that time you met with Dr. Jon L. Konzen, Owens-Corning's Medical Director. Dick Hite has recently sent you all a letter which reviewed highlights of that 1971 meeting.

I want to give you an opportunity to ask your questions, but it might be helpful if I first answered some of the questions I anticipate many of you have. Perhaps the key question is, "Will I get cancer?"

At this point, there is no way to answer that one. No one has found a way to predict who will develop cancer and who will not. It's like the link between smoking and cancer. There is an increased risk in developing cancer if you smoke. Some smokers will [illegible] ers will not. There is no way to determine who will ar[illegible] worked here when asbestos was used in the product, [illegible] material. How much exposure depends on your job and [illegible] id that job or worked in the plant. Based on my understanding of the plant environment in the past, you probably [illegible] a significant exposure to asbestos. I don't believe it was as severe as [illegible] exposures others had in shipbuilding. I don't believe this plant ever had the concentrations of dust that I've seen reported in shipbuilding and heavy construction. But there is no question that employees at this plant prior to 1972 had a significant exposure to asbestos.

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Now I would like to open the meeting to your questions. I've kept my remarks brief so we can spend as much time as we need in discussing your concerns. Questions?

(Question & answer session)

I'm pleased that we've had an opportunity to get together. I'm glad Dick called me when you raised some of these questions with him because this matter is a concern to all of us and we want you to be well informed.

If you have other questions after I'm gone, please be sure to direct them to someone here at the plant or your own physician. (name), the Plant Nurse; (Dr.), the Plant Physician; or Dick Hite, the Plant Manager, will all be glad to help. If they can't answer your question they'll get in touch with me and I'll get back to you with an answer either through them or by calling you directly. Thanks for your attention.

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