

June 14, 1961

Mr. C. A. Pratt, Vice President
Western Mineral Products Co.
4725 Olson Memorial Highway
Minneapolis 22, Minnesota

Dear Cap:

In reply to your letter of June 12 I am happy to outline our past experience in regard to the effect of dust in our mill upon our employees' health. This is a very complex and confusing thing and one from which it is difficult to draw any conclusions. I will outline our history on this in the hopes that it may be of some help to you.

As background to our experience, you know we have always had the problem of dust in our milling and handling of vermiculite. This problem has received considerable attention over the years and we have attempted to take whatever steps necessary to control the dust intensity where there would be an exposure to employees. We have met with varying degrees of success in various places in the operation.

Many studies have been made of the dust and dust problem by different people over the years in analyzing the problem. All studies have shown that in the operation there is no free silica present, but the minerals found in the deposit are silicates, micas and asbestos-like minerals. Silicosis is caused by free silica and not by the silicates. Asbestos, however, is a cause of asbestosis, which has been a matter of concern. There is a relatively large amount of asbestos dust present in our mill and this is difficult to control.

From a report written in 1956 by an Industrial Hygiene Engineer, Division of Disease Control, Montana State Board of Health, I quote the following on the dust toxicity: "A review of the literature indicates that vermiculite or the dust from this material is not especially toxic and is generally included only as a nuisance dust. However, the asbestos dust in the dust in the air is of considerable toxicity, and is a factor in the consideration of reducing dustiness in this plant."

Mr. C. A. Pratt

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These will not eliminate the dust problem in the concentrates, but we expect to cut it down considerably.

This has been a review of our situation. I hope it will be of some help to you. Our dust control problem receives continuing attention from our mill superintendent. It is one which we continually work on in trying to keep our ventilation as efficient as possible and whenever it is possible to make any improvements we try to do so. We usually receive a visit from an engineer from the State Board of Health about once a year and he usually makes recommendations to us which we try to carry out.

If there is any further help that we can give you, we will certainly be glad to try to furnish it. If there are any particular points on this discourse upon which I could elaborate further, please feel free to ask me to do so.

Sincerely yours

ZONOLITE COMPANY

By:

E. D. Lovick

EDL/jb:—

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