FILE NAME: Asten Hill (AH)

DATE: 1955

DOC#: AH018

DOCUMENT DESCRIPTION: Meeting Minutes

HOLMES #10

October 17, 1955

MINUTES OF THE ASBESTOS TEXTILE INSTITUTE

AIR HYGIENE COMMITTEE MEETING

September 7, 1955

IN ATTENDANCE WERE: D. R. Holmes
J. W. Weber
R. C. Smith
H. H. Jackson

The Air Hygiene Committee was most pleased to have as its guests representatives of the Quebec Mining Association - Dr. Paul Cartier, Mr. Ivan Sabourin and Mr. Maurice La Chance.

Mr. Sabourin, general counsel for the Q.A.M.A., told of the history and function of that association. The Quebec Asbestos Mining Association has been operating for approximately 20 years, and its membership represents approximately 65% of the world supply of asbestos fibre. As an industry association, it functions quite similarly to the Asbestos Textile Institute. Considerable attention is given the health problems of the industry. There are two medical clinics; one at Asbestos, the other at Thetford, both fully staffed and with complete hospital facilities. Pre-employment and periodic health examinations are provided for all workers. Safety engineering services have been provided by the Association to its members for a number of years. More recently, an industrial hygiene engineer has been added to its staff. As a result of the industry emphasis on health, safety and dust control for the past ten years, there are practically no new cases of asbestosis other than those with twenty or more years exposure. Mr. Sabourin stated that the present major health problems of the industry pertained to the relationship of heart difficulties and cancer to asbestos exposure.

Dr. Paul Cartier told of the operation of the Thetford Clinic. Established in 1945, the Clinic provides health services to the Thetford people. Pre-employment and periodic annual examinations include an X-ray and electrocardiagram, as well as the other usual examination features.

Commenting on the occurrence of asbestosis, Dr. Cartier indicated that after ten years exposure, about 50% would have some histological evidence of asbestosis (minimal tissue changes not sufficient to be observed on the X-ray), 10% would have some radiological evidence and 2% might have some clinical evidence of disability from asbestosis.

In reference to the pulmonary cancer experience in the industry, Dr. Cartier stated that in the ten years of the clinic's operation, there have been fifteen cases of cancer observed. Nine of these on autopsy showed some histological evidence of asbestosis. In six, however, there was no evidence of asbestosis. This experience would indicate a very much lower attack rate than that reported from the British experience of 13%.

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Autopsy study is made of every occupational disease claim case, and as many others as possible. Dr. Cartier stated that this was of utmost importance not only in determining the extent of liability, but also in increasing the knowledge of the disease process. The clinic has not done any work with intermittent, positive pressure breathing, although some use of cortisone is being made. The experience to date, however, has been insufficient to justify any conclusions.

Dr. Cartier expressed the opinion that considerable research must be done in the fields of cancer and heart to define more clearly the role, if any, played by inhalation of asbestos.

Mr. Maurice La Chance told of the experience in dust control in the mines and mills of the Association members. Annual dust surveys are made at eleven mines and reports submitted to each. The standard U. S. Bureau of Mines technique is used for surveying with the midget impinger. For fibre evaluation, the definition of the length being three times the width is applied. Mr. La Chance stated that since the program was inaugurated in 1946, the average dust concentrations have been reduced 50%. In general, the fibre content of the total dust count ranged from 1% to 12%. In his opinion, the most effective dust collector system to date is the bag type Wheelabrator unit.

John Weber reported on the bag dumping unit now in operation in his plant. Photographs were shown and John indicated that full details may be obtained from the Wilkra Company, 71 Denton Avenue, New Hyde Park, Long Island, N. Y. Although dust counts have not yet been taken, visual observation indicates complete control of this usually dusty operation. The unit has not been in operation sufficiently long to estimate the maintenance and operating cost. The shaking cycle is less than one minute per bag, and John indicated that the bags were shaken considerably cleaner than by the hand method.

A general discussion of fibre conditioning agents was held, and it was suggested that the experience of our associate members might be of value to the technical committee which is further investigating this problem. We herewith extend an invitation to each associate member to forward a summary of its experience with fibre conditioning as a means of preventing dust control.

H. H. Jackson
Chairman
Air Hygiene Committee