Johns-Manville called "the most serious defect" in FDA's proposal the "failure . . . to provide a definition of the term 'asbestos-form particle.'" The firm explained:

> "This term, without proper definition, is too vague and ambiguous to assist industry in the application and the FDA in the enforcement of the proposal . . . We presume that the FDA is referring to a type of asbestos 'fiber' rather than a particle which resembles the form of an asbestos 'fiber.' It is our intention . . . to propose a definition of the term 'asbestos-form particle,' or in the alternative to provide a new term which is self-defining."

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FDA PROBES HAZARDS FROM CHLORINATED PARAFFINS, SEWAGE SLUDGE

The Food and Drug Administration has turned its attention to determining if chlorinated paraffins or the use of sewage sludge may be contaminating the food supply.

Dr. C. F. Jelinek, Director of the Division of Chemical Technology in FDA's Bureau of Foods, reported on new FDA concerns from industrial contaminants in a paper presented in Washington at the 89th annual meeting Oct. 9-12 of the Association of Official Analytical Chemists.

He said chlorinated paraffins, produced at a rate of 60 to 70 million pounds a year, are promoted for many of the same uses as polychlorinated biphenyls, which have been cut back to closed system uses, in paints, adhesives, and a variety of industrial products. He said the volume of the chlorinated paraffins is running as high as PCBs during their peak sales years, and may present similar problems because they possess many of the same properties, including stability in an aquatic environment.

Jelinek said FDA has just begun work on developing methods for detecting the chlorinated paraffins. He made no mention of the toxicity of the substances, but presumably work on this problem is also being conducted at the agency.

In another new area of work, the FDA-er hinted at some of the problems uncovered from attempts by Chicago officials to use sewage sludges as fertilizers for food crops, particularly corn and soy beans.

Noting that the Chicago officials and the University of Illinois, where the work is being conducted, are cooperating with FDA, he pointed out that analyses for metals showed soy beans containing levels of cadmium that caused FDA some concern. He also expressed some worry over microbiological hazards from use of the sludge.

He said he has been assured by Chicago officials that a decrease in cadmium can be effected by the sewage plants.

However, Jelinek said, FDA plans to work closely with the Environmental Protection Agency on problems stemming from uses of industrial chemicals that may contaminate the food supply.

The two examples of new problem areas were given, he told the AOAC, to point up the need for developing a more systematic method for determining hazards.

Chief objectives of the present FDA program, Jelinek said, are to (1) develop sufficient information to establish guidelines for recognized industrial food contaminants; and (2) search for likely industrial contaminants and evaluate their hazards, if found in food.

New PCB Monitoring Program Disclosed

Among the criteria used by FDA to search for probable problem areas, he said, are production volume, likely by-products, end-use patterns, means of disposal, stability, solubility, and toxicity.

Jelinek disclosed that the FDA has begun new monitoring programs for PCBs -- in fish and in silo coatings. He also revealed that FDA is paying close attention to contamination from phthalates, particularly in fish, and said FDA is hoping to get a better picture from a modest survey of fish products.

Several papers on phthalate methodology were included among the nearly 250 presented to AOAC.

FDA reported results from methods used to detect di-2-ethyl hexyl, diisooctyl, diisodecyl, and several other lower molecular weight phthalates in fatty foods while a Department of Interior researcher identified (from channel catfish and fathead minnows) the following four metabolic products from di-2-ethylhexyl phthalate:

(1) 2-ethyl-hexyl phthalate, (2) a monoester glucuronide, (3) phthalic acid, and (4) its glucuronide conjugate.

A method reported from Canada's Health Protection Branch raised new concerns over hazards from asbestos fibers, which were detected by the Canadians in beer, sherry, port, vermouth, soft drinks and city drinking water at levels generally ranging from 1 to 11 million per liter.

Stomach and other cancers have been detected at high rates in asbestos workers; and scientists have recently been concerned about asbestos contamination of lungs from high air levels.