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Japan Asbestos Association

AIA Committee

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For 3rd Biennial Conference of AIA.

I. Overall situation.

1. Government agency:

There is no significant change on legislations ever since the last conference.

Speaking about the subject matter of Ministry of Labour, appointment of an operation chief at the workplace, medical examinations and number of other requirements were obligated in accordance with Pnuemoconiosis Law and Industrial Safety and Health Law. Besides, in a circular notice of the Chief of Labour Standard Office in 1976, it was also ruled that maximum concentration of asbestos dust at working environment shall be 2 F/ml (0.2 F/ml in case of Blue Asbestos). This standard is still effective up to this date.

In the meantime, a responsible person in charge of Labour Ministry has recently expressed his fundamental opinion about asbestos as follows:

"Current 2 F/ml standard shall be considered to be minimum and every company should always do his best to improve working environment as much as possible. Meanwhile, it seems that asbestos would not be banned even in future due to its unique properties of natural fibre and usefulness as well."

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On the other hand, EPA has not positively taken up asbestos matter in the passed years, however, for the next three years a new research is planned to find to what extent air pollution with asbestos would be existed.

2. Industry:

Statistics in 1980 shows that import of asbestos is about 300,000 tons and consumption is estimated around 260,000 tons in Japan. There are mainly eight industrial associations relating asbestos which are consist of approximately 140 member companies. The unanimous opinion of these companies is that:

(1) They cannot discontinue use of asbestos from its economical and unique physical standpoints.
(2) Most of them are able to meet current 2 fibres/ml standard.
(3) However, they will continue best efforts to develop possible substitutes for conventional raw materials considering more stringent restrictions might be established in future.

II. Situation of each industry.

1. Asbestos Cement Products Association of Japan:

This is the biggest user of asbestos in our country. Research and development of substitute for asbestos are still going on, however, there is no sufficient one whatsoever at present. Most of the member companies could conform to 1F/ml level due to the wet process. The big problem they have faced

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is the development of an appropriate cutting method outside factories to meet current standard. Unfortunately, no sufficient method has not been developed as yet.

2. Japan Automotive Friction Material Association.

They say that there is no other suitable raw material but asbestos judging from economical and physical viewpoints. Non-asbestos based Disk Pads have recently been introduced into market, but full range of acceptance would substantially be delayed because of its higher cost and inferior performance. They have a problem that some parts of their process exceed 2 F/ml level where they are forced to use respirators.

Although some people are concerned about airborne asbestos dust created from braking in Japan, member companies believe it is not hazardous to health as cleared by the research of Bendix Corporation in U.S.A.

3. Japan Asbestos Products Manufacturers Association.

This association is consist of various range of manufacturers relating asbestos products such as Thermal Insulations, Sealing Materials, Millboard, Calcium Silicate Boards, Textile and so forth. Many member companies are spending substantial amount of time and money to develop substitutes to meet user's request. But they will continue to use asbestos for great deal of products under present circumstances. If governmental restrictions become more strict, some of them may not conform to it.

4. Pulp Cement Boards Association of Japan.

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Like Asbestos Cement Products Industry, there is no question about their compliance with current standard. However, most of

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member companies are now using sub-contractors for opening asbestos fibre who might have minor problems concerning dust level. Number of years or more would be necessary for development of substitutes for asbestos.

5. Asbestos Paper Industry.

This is also no serious problem about dust level because of the wet process. Glass fibre or carbon fibre is supposed to be potential substitute, however, none of them is good enough for thier use.

6. Japan Vinyl Tiles Institute:

While all member companies are able to conform to current standard, some extent of difficulties may be raised if the regulation becomes lower by 1 F/ml. They will continue to use asbestos like other industries, but it is concerned about the dust problem created during demolition of abestos backed vinyl floor.

7. Japan Asbestos Textile Industry Association:

Due to the dry process as well as small scale of company, this industry has the most serious problems whatsoever. Many companies are hard to meet even current 2 F/ml standard. Moreover, financially they have number of difficulties to solve problems they have faced.

Here is a particular request from this industry to AIA regarding medical records. It is ruled by the Ordinance of Ministry of Labour that medical records of each employee exposed to asbestos while manufacturing or handling asbestos

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contained products shall be maintained for at least 30 years. They think the 30 year period is too long for recordkeeping and would like to know present situation particularly about this point in other countries.

8. Asbestos Cement Pipe Association of Japan:

Demand of asbestos cement pipes is now for general water and agricultural water supply. Member companies are making contineous efforts to meet 1 F/ml level and do not consider at all any substitute for asbestos.

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