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TEXTILE FIBERS DEPARTMENT

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SPRUANCE FIBERS PLANT
Richmond, Virginia
March 11, 1968

J. A. SIGMAN (2)
DIVISION ENGINEER
MANUFACTURING DIVISIONS
TEXTILE FIBERS DEPT.
WILMINGTON

Attention: D. D. Drummond

ASBESTOS EXPOSURE HAZARDS

Your letter of March 4, 1968 covered certain asbestos exposure hazards with an outline of some plans that the Construction Division uses to document and control working conditions in insulation areas. At Spruance we have quite a bit of personal experience in this field. Our local plant insulators maintained excellent communications with those employed on Construction. The writer has held a number of meetings with the insulators and their independent union (A.R.W.I.) on the subject of health hazards. This was a strong factor in this craft being upgraded from Group 6 to Group 7 top rate during 1967.

We have set up at the Spruance Fibers location a physical examination for each insulator each six months. This consists primarily of a chest X-ray which is compared by the plant physician with previous X-rays of the individual to see whether any changes have occurred that might be the result of asbestosis. Our local plant physicians are qualified in this diagnosis. This is comparable to what the International Unions are doing with the workers on construction except that we have substituted the plant physicians as the decision making individual rather than the Medical College of Virginia physician who reads the X-rays for construction workers. This system is similar to the one used on the old rayon plants for checking possible lead poisoning in leadburners.

As a result of our contacts with insulators and subsequent developments, I question very much whether each plant ought to develop a program to carry this story to every wage roll employee. This does not imply that we should ignore or remain ignorant of the hazards and available corrective action. Unfortunately in cases like this when you go out to cover wage roll people the hazards get built up in their minds rather than the precautions that you are taking. I would suggest that each plant improve its ventilation facilities and establish the readings they may wish to take and let the employees feel that these are for their comfort and convenience rather than an invitation to submit claims against their employer.

J. A. Sigman
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In commenting on the Construction Division program and the proposed Textile Fibers Program, we would agree with most of the points other than the wage roll informational one noted above. It has been our experience here that it requires very dusty conditions to reach the limits described as TLV. Whether or not we can attain the goal of 5000 will depend on the manner of taking the readings. In spite of good ventilation at the power equipment, this reading may be exceeded during heavy sawing operations. We would appreciate any information from Purchasing or the Thermal Insulation Sub-Committee on brands of insulation that contain more hazardous materials than the standard brands.


W. H. JEFFRESS
WORKS ENGINEER

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