

FILE NAME: Celanese (CEL)

DATE: 1977 Sept 7

DOC#: CEL018

DOCUMENT DESCRIPTION: Memo – Protective Clothing and Employee
Lockers

MEMORANDUM

DRAFT

Date: September 7, 1977

To: File

From: W. B. Reitze

cc: P. Kotin, M.D.
W. R. Paul, M.D.

Subject: PROTECTIVE CLOTHING AND EMPLOYEE LOCKERS

The recent Corporate decision to provide protective clothing to those Johns-Manville workers involved with asbestos fiber or asbestos products where fiber is not firmly bound has raised a number of questions from our operating divisions. In an effort to perhaps clarify some of these questions, Dr. Kotin wrote to the medical directors of ten of the large U.S. corporations including Shell Oil, Union Carbide, Celanese, Alcoa, DuPont, Exxon, General Electric, Bethlehem Steel, U.S. Steel, and Kaiser Aluminum. The question was asked of the medical directors what type of protective clothing program was in force in their corporations to protect employees from both carcinogenic agents, as well as other potentially harmful materials. All of the companies responded, some in more detail than others. In summary, we may make the following conclusions:

1. All the major companies do furnish protective clothing to various employee groups. The decision to furnish clothing is based upon the potential hazard of the materials handled. The chemical and oil companies are protecting employees against materials that may soak into an employee's clothing and be absorbed through the skin.

Others are concerned with an employee exposure as well as a family exposure to such items as toxic dusts including lead. Most large firms also furnish specialized protective clothing which will protect an employee against heat, cold, flame, molten metal, water, chemical splashes, etc.

2. The laundering of protective clothing is handled in a number of ways. Usually where large numbers of people are involved the laundering is done in-house. If there is a very small employee population involved, an outside laundry service or uniform supply service is utilized. It is extremely rare that contaminated clothing from the workplace is sent home to be laundered by the employee's family.
3. The frequency of clean clothes issuance varies with the particular substance the employee handles, weekly being the longest period, daily being the most common period, and in a number of cases with chemical carcinogens, protective clothing is changed 3 or 4 times per day. The issuance of clothing is usually handled by utilizing a system similar to the tool crib method used by most large industrials for issuance of tools and supplies.

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4. Lockers are furnished to employees ~~where needed~~ and where needed, dual lockers are furnished. However, with the use of the tool crib system, dual lockers are not needed, since the contaminated clothing is deposited for laundering on a daily basis.
 5. The reasons for furnishing protective clothing and the methods of administration vary widely within the companies polled. Few companies have corporate-wide programs which apply across the board to all their operations. The majority, because of the vast diversification in operations, leave the actual administration of a protective clothing program to the location. The mandate for protective clothing, of course, is issued by the corporate environmental health department. Some corporations state their policy rather plainly that it is to protect the employee, to protect the employee's family, to aid in quality control (clean room activities) or merely to enhance the corporation's public image (gas station uniforms). Almost all the major corporations furnish protective clothing of the type discussed free of charge to their employees. In some cases, protective clothing has been a subject for the bargaining table and is negotiated with the labor contract. In a few instances (DuPont with chloroaniline and tetraethyl lead), "protective clothing committees" within the plant have been set up to determine a fair and equitable method for clothing issuance.

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6. All medical directors feel quite strongly that persons handling carcinogenic agents should receive protective clothing, not only for their own protection but also for the protection of their families should dusts, oils, or chemicals be carried out of the plant on the workers' clothing.