

New Cancer Case At Goodrich Plant

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (AP) — The sixth victim of a rare kind of liver cancer has been discovered among workers at the B. F. Goodrich plant here.

The worker is still living and has not been identified. But Dr. J. Bradford Block, head of the state Occupational Safety and Health Administration's medical program, confirmed the sixth case Monday, after Goodrich officials declined to confirm that the man has the disease.

The number of plant workers who have died from the rare cancer is five. The disease, called angiosarcoma, is believed by medical experts to be caused by prolonged exposure to vinyl chloride—a chemical used in the manufacture of plastics at the Goodrich plant on Louisville's Bell Lane.

An international research effort has been launched by the National Cancer Institute and other occupational disease agencies to trace the use and effects of the chemical on workers. More than 6,600 American employees are believed to be exposed to vinyl chloride in

their work, and thousands more in Europe are believed affected.

The only cases of the rare liver disease to be directly linked to working conditions are the six in Louisville.

Meanwhile, several workers at the Louisville plant say they suspected their work might be harmful to their health long before the company announced a possible link between the cancer deaths and vinyl chloride operations.

A worker who recently underwent an operation for removal of his spleen said there have always been rumors among employees, and that they seemed to increase "right after somebody died."

Goodrich began investigating the possible link between employee deaths and vinyl chloride last month. Dr. Block said Monday that most workers who developed the cancer had worked with the chemical about 19 years. He said he thinks investigation will show that it is only workers who were exposed many years ago—before there were any safeguards—who may develop the disease.

It has been learned by the Louisville Courier-Journal that the polyvinyl manufacturing process caused health problems of a less serious nature in the past.

In the late 1950s and 1960s some workers who cleaned the large vessels in which the plastic is made experienced severe damage to bones in their fingertips.

Blood circulation into the fingers was significantly reduced for some employees, and the fingers became shorter and began clubbing. During the worst stages of the disease, X-rays of the fingertips showed little evidence of bone.

Some workers also experienced thickened skin, particularly on their arms. Altogether, 31 employees who cleaned the vessels reported some damage to their hands, according to a company report which appeared in the Journal of the American Medical Association in 1967.