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Immediate Release

Contact:

New York, New York, July XX -- W.R. Grace & Co. released today the findings of a McGill University research effort the company commissioned to study the health of former and current vermiculite workers in Grace's Libby, Montana mining and milling operations. Vermiculite is a natural mica-like mineral widely used in a variety of construction and agricultural products.

Today's public release of the findings follows a series of briefings made by Dr. J. Corbett McDonald, who directed the McGill research, to the Libby study participants, local doctors, and others in the community during the week of July 8, 1985. The findings will also be presented in September at the Sixth International Symposium on Inhaled Particles in Cambridge, England.

The purpose of the McGill research was to assess the health risks associated with exposure to tremolite asbestos fibers in a mining environment. Tremolite is a natural contaminant in vermiculite that is completely removed, except for trace amounts, from all finished Grace vermiculite products.

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The McGill research, begun in 1983, included two studies. One study (mortality) examined the deaths that had occurred in a specific group of current and former employees, while the other was an X-ray survey of a separate group of present and past Libby workers. Two similar studies were commenced by the National Institute of Occupational Health and Safety (NIOSH) in 1982. According to Robert Walsh, Executive Vice President of Grace's Construction Products Division, Grace believed the value of the NIOSH studies could be enhanced by a simultaneous and cooperative effort and subsequently asked McGill to undertake the Libby research.

"Dr. McDonald's group has extensive experience in conducting occupational health studies, specifically in the area of dust-related disease," said Walsh. The NIOSH findings similar to those of Dr. McDonald's will be presented jointly with the McGill study results this fall in Cambridge, England. According to Walsh, both efforts provide valuable research on health-related effects associated with vermiculite mining.

The McGill Mortality Study

The study included 406 men who were employed before 1963 and had worked at least one year in the Libby operations. The whereabouts of each individual as of July 1, 1983 was determined. The number found to be living on that date was

241 and 165 were determined to be deceased. The study found that in total there were 43 cancer-related deaths, 21 non-malignant lung disease, 65 heart and stroke deaths, and 36 due to other causes. When those figures were compared to the expected death rate for U.S. white males in general, there was an increase in the number of deaths in the Libby group by 24 from all causes.

The death certificates and employees' work histories suggest that the increased number of deaths was almost entirely related to exposure to tremolite fibers at a time in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s when the levels of fiber exposure were exceedingly higher than those of the Libby environment today.

"Since purchase of the Libby mine in 1963, Grace has shown its concern for the health and safety of its workers by implementing a variety of programs to reduce dust levels and monitor employees' health," said Walsh. "The McGill research has helped confirm that as a result of these programs, our Libby employees have worked in an environment over the last 10 years where the risk has been increasingly reduced." Today, tremolite levels are 20 times lower than federal regulations permit.

The McGill study estimates that for every fiber year of exposure (meaning exposure to the equivalent of one fiber per

cubic centimeter of air for a year's time), a Libby employee's risk of lung cancer is increased by one percent. For example, at the exposure level of 0.1 f/cc, in today's Libby working environment and assuming employment for 50 years, an estimate of about one-half a lung cancer case above the national average could occur. While there is a company ban on hiring smokers and smoking on the job, Dr. McDonald, during his July 8-10 visit to Libby, encouraged workers who smoke off the job, as well as retired Libby workers, to stop. "Discontinuing cigarette smoking could do much to reduce your risk of lung cancer to levels well below the national average," he told workers.

The McGill X-Ray Survey

The X-ray survey, designed to determine the presence of any changes in the lungs of Libby employees, included a study group of 300 people in three categories. The first category was comprised of 164 men and 9 women employed at Libby as of July 1, 1983. The second category included 80 former employees, living within 200 miles of the mine. The third group was comprised of 47 local men without any known dust exposure who attended the hospital for routine chest X-rays. This third group was used as a control for the X-ray reading process. The X-ray readers, internationally recognized in their field, looked for signs of increased opacities (lung scars), pleural thickening and pleural calcification (changes

in the pleura or sac that encloses the lungs). The X-rays were read independently by each reader without any prior information on fiber exposure levels.

The study estimates that for every 100 fiber years of exposure, a Libby employee at retirement age has a potential 5-10 percent increased risk of developing lung opacities. According to Dr. McDonald, at the current levels of exposure of 0.1 f/cc -- if an employee were hired today and worked for 50 years in the mine -- no detectable changes of lung tissues other than those related to aging, should be evident on the employee's X-rays.

Grace's Commitment to Employee Health and Safety

Since 1963, when Grace purchased the Libby mine, the Company has implemented a number of programs to protect the health and safety of its employees. The introduction of annual chest X-rays and the installation of ventilation equipment were among the initial steps. The completion of a wet mill in 1974 greatly reduced fiber levels and other dust control techniques have been implemented since then. Grace has also implemented a smoking ban and added an annual lung function test and employee health questionnaire to its monitoring program. Air sampling to evaluate the environment is done on a regular basis. These efforts have resulted in a continued reduction of health risk to all Libby employees.

"The sponsoring of the McGill studies, and Grace's cooperation in the NIOSH studies, reflect the Company's commitment to evaluate present and future health risks to its employees," said Walsh."

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