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THE LOUISVILLE TIMES, FRIDAY, MARCH 1, 1974

1961 death at Goodyear resembled cancer here

By DONALD M. HOUGHTON
and DENNIS POLITE

Louisville Times Staff Writers

A chemical worker at the Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co. plant in Niagara Falls, N. Y., died in 1961 of a rare form of cancer of the liver similar to the cancer that killed at least five B. F. Goodrich Co. employees in Louisville.

Goodyear today confirmed a check of its medical records uncovered the death from hemangioendothelioma, a relatively rare cancer of the liver. The company noted that medical authorities consider it to be similar to angiosarcoma. At least five Goodrich employees have succumbed to angiosarcoma and a sixth is hospitalized with it.

The Louisville deaths of workers exposed to vinyl and polyvinyl chloride—two chemicals basic to the plastics industry—have sparked an international investigation of a possible link between the chemicals and liver diseases.

Earlier this week Goodyear acknowledged that the initial review of its Niagara Falls health records had revealed a 1970 death from a hematoma, or malignant cancer, of the liver cells and two cases of cirrhosis of the liver, one of which had proved fatal to a polyvinyl-

chloride worker in 1968. At that time, Goodyear said its investigation was continuing.

The 1961 death was of a chemical operator in a vinyl-chloride processing area who had been exposed to the chemical for 15 years.

The 1961 death is also the earliest now under investigation for a possible link with the worker's exposure to the chemicals. The five known Goodrich deaths occurred between 1964 and last December and the first three were reported by the company in late January.

A meeting has been scheduled tomorrow in Washington at which medical authorities will attempt to establish a better set of procedures for earlier detection to liver problems among vinyl and polyvinyl-chloride workers. Another group of medical experts will be meeting with officials of the Center for Disease Control and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health.

Dr. Joseph Wagoner, director of field studies and clinical investigations for the National Institute, said the investigators haven't ruled out the possibility that other diseases caused by the exposure to the chemicals involved in the manufacturing process may be found.

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March 2nd, 1974

THE LOUISVILLE TIMES, SATURDAY, MARCH 2, 1974

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At Goodrich plant

7th worker treated for rare liver cancer

By DENNIS POLITE
and DONALD M. HOUGHTON
Louisville Times Staff Writer

A seventh B. F. Goodrich employee has been diagnosed as having angiosarcoma, a rare cancer of the liver.

The 44-year-old Louisville chemical worker's condition was diagnosed following surgery. He is the second local man to be hospitalized with the rare disease that last year killed only 21 Americans according to the best records available.

Five chemical workers at the firm's Bells Lane plant died of the disease at various times between 1964 and last December. Word of the deaths has sparked an international examination of medical records and a review of safety techniques in plants such as the one in Louisville that produces vinyl and polyvinyl chloride, basic materials for the plastics industry.

Meanwhile medical efforts to develop better testing methods to provide earlier detection of the occupational disease may have suffered a setback. A liver test that medical authorities had hoped might provide early signs of angiosarcoma was given to a number of Goodrich employees. All of the tests, including the one administered to the other known living victim of the disease, showed negative results. Like the seventh victim, the sixth man's condition was confirmed after a liver biopsy, or sample, was removed surgically.

Yesterday a Goodrich spokesman confirmed that one of 15 employees who had

shown signs of abnormalities in two earlier tests had shown positive cancer signs in a liver-scan test but he said company medical officials had not pinpointed the type of cancer involved. Later the company informed Dr. J. Bradford Block, medical consultant to the Kentucky Department of Labor, that the man had angiosarcoma.

Testing of employees increases

The company spokesman also confirmed reports that the number of persons being given liver-scan tests after having shown abnormalities in earlier tests has now increased to 23. Previously the company had said there were 18 workers who required liver-scan tests.

Government and company medical authorities throughout the 6,500-employee vinyl and polyvinyl industry are in the midst of research and studies aimed at uncovering any links between contact with the chemicals and diseases besides the rare liver cancer.

In the latest case, the chemical worker had been at the plant for 20 years. He was one of 55 workers who showed abnormalities in preliminary tests conducted between last October and early December. The man showed positive results following a liver scan and, after additional tests, surgery was performed. The "operating table diagnosis" was angiosarcoma and pathological slides of the liver sample have been taken for further analysis, Dr. Block said.

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The Courier-Journal

SATURDAY, MARCH 2, 1974

SECTION B

Cancer found in 7th worker at Goodrich

By DAN KAUFFMAN

Courier-Journal Staff Writer

A seventh B.F. Goodrich employee has a rare liver cancer. The cancer was discovered yesterday afternoon during an exploratory operation at a Louisville hospital, according to a state official.

The sixth and seventh victims of the disease, angiosarcoma of the liver, are still alive. The first five died between 1964 and last December.

Further surgery will not be done on the two surviving men, but a form of chemotherapy using internal radiation may be tried, according to Dr. J. Bradford Block. The names of the two men haven't been released.

Block, who is head of the medical program for the state Occupational Safety and Health Administration, said the seventh man, who is 44, has worked at the polyvinyl chloride plastic operation at the Bells Lane plant for about 20 years.

All of the cancer victims are long-time employees of the firm, and doctors believe the cancers are almost certainly job-related.

A company public relations official confirmed last night that the operation was performed yesterday but he said it was his understanding that the diagnosis was incomplete. Block said he confirmed the diagnosis with the company physician.

Vinyl chloride, a gas used to make polyvinyl chloride plastic, is the agent suspected of causing the cancer.

Rate exposed to the gas at rates as low as 250 parts per million parts of air have developed malignant tumors.

The company adopted a limit of 50 parts per million for the gas last summer. Block believes the cancers probably resulted from high exposure to the gas early in the men's careers at Goodrich.

Goodrich was the first to announce deaths from the cancer, but since then other firms have begun to search their records and discovered that some of their plastic workers have contracted the disease.

Yesterday Goodyear Tire and Rubber Co. announced that one of its vinyl chloride workers died in 1961 of a rare form of liver cancer similar to the Goodrich cancers. The man had worked in the Goodyear plant at Niagara Falls, N.Y., for 15 years.

Goodrich has since ceased its vinyl chloride operations. It still makes polyvinyl chloride plastic but purchases the vinyl chloride.

The Goodrich company makes its vinyl chloride at a plant in Calvert City, Ky., and ships it to Louisville. No deaths or cancers have been reported at the Calvert City plant.

Other companies that have reported at least one death include the Union Carbide Co. at its plant in South Charleston, W. Va., and Imperial Chemical, Ltd., in England.

The seventh man with the rare cancer at the Goodrich plant was in a group of 15 men recently transferred out of the polyvinyl chloride operations because blood tests had indicated liver abnormalities.

Further X-rays and other tests also indicated liver abnormalities in the one case, Block said, and the biopsy yesterday confirmed the cancer.

A company spokesman said the liver X-rays of the other 14 men have shown no abnormalities.

The company spokesman added that a test which it was believed might detect angiosarcoma earlier has been given to 23 employees, including the seventh man, without showing any positive results.

The procedure, called the alpha-fetoprotein test, has been used for earlier detection of other kinds of liver cancer and officials hoped that it also might indicate the angiosarcoma.

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