

FO-4

INTER-OFFICE COMMUNICATION

Company file

To: Mr. Ed Tyler

Date: January 14, 1975

From: Richard Maykowski

Subject: Reported "Lead Poisoning" at Owens-Illinois Inc.

PLAINTIFF'S EXHIBIT

K-2075

On January 7, 1975, I visited Owens-Illinois, Inc., Plant 29, Levis Development, Route 25, Perrysburg, Ohio, in response to a request for service relayed to me through Richard Lewis, District Supervisor, at the Toledo Office. The request had come into the office through Mr. Harry Morrell, an officer of the Building Trades Council, and concerned case of reported lead poisoning among construction workers during a building expansion program at the Owens Illinois plant.

I arrived at the plant at approximately 8:10 a.m., identified myself and stated my purpose. I was asked by the production manager to wait while he contacted the appropriate people at corporate headquarters to determine who had responsibility for this matter at approximately 9:25 a.m. Mr. Roger Speelman, Toledo Area Safety Director, arrived and, after a brief discussion, we proceeded into the work area.

First we went into Plant 29 to the area where the solder glass operation had been located prior to the plant expansion and subsequent re-arrangement. The solder glass operations used lead to produce a glass seal for the ends of television picture tubes. All of the equipment had been moved out and the area decontaminated to remove any residual lead. This area had been inspected by OSHA at an earlier date. A citation had been issued concerning excessive lead exposures with an abatement date of February 24, 1975. There was no activity of any kind in this room at the time of this visit.

Next we went to the building housing the new solder glass operation, most of which was in process of being installed. These operations were located in a building inside the development, but about one fourth mile away. The purpose of going to this site was to attempt to locate someone familiar with the complaint or someone duly chosen as a representative of the employee group filing the complaint, such as a union officer. It was also necessary to find someone to act as spokesman for any contractor or contractors involved. After approximately one hour of searching, we were directed to a union steward, originally visited.

It is interesting to note that the person who directed us to the union steward remembered the steward's name from a meeting held the previous day when an industrial hygienist from OSHA had visited the facility in response to a complaint filed at probably the same time the Division had been requested to visit the plant. Since Mr. Speelman, who was accompanying and assisting me on this visit, was the safety director for this plant, it is logical to assume that he would have been present at that meeting, especially since he later stated in casual conversation that he handled all inspections, including OSHA, at back in Plant 29, who had acted as the employee representative during an OSHA inspection

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concerning this same complaint on the previous day.

It is interesting to note that Mr. Speelman, who accompanying and assisting me on this visit, was the safety director for this plant, making it logical to assume that he also was present at the OSHA inspection, especially since he later stated in casual conversation that he handled all OSHA inspections at company facilities throughout the Toledo area, but he did not immediately seek out this union steward, but wasted an hour searching for someone to tell him whom we should speak with. While it is not immediately obvious what he or the company could have hoped to gain by that wild goose chase for an hour, there seems to be a reasonable amount of evidence that, that is what was done. It is always possible that he just did not connect the two inspections as pertaining to exactly the same matter, or that he was not present at the meeting the previous day. However, it is impossible to eliminate all suspicion from my mind, even though there is no concrete evidence to support it.

Upon returning to Plant 29, we located Richard Mapes, the union steward who had apparently been handling this situation, and the following is a summary of his account of the events which had occurred.

Several months ago, when equipment from the solder glass operation was first being removed from Plant 29, the hazard of lead exposure in the area was brought to the attention of both Owens-Illinois and the contractors involved. The employees requested that the room be posted as a hazardous area and that respirators be required while working there. The company replied that the area was not hazardous and that the employees would not be adversely affected by their short exposure to the lead. However, after a meeting between representatives of Owens-Illinois and the Building Trades Council, a list of recommended work practices was issued, including the recommended, but not required, use of respirators which would be furnished by Owens-Illinois.

One note of interest should be inserted at this point. According to the contract between Owens Illinois and the contractors, if any work area was declared to be hazardous, Owens Illinois would pay the men working in that area an addition \$.10 per hour. How much this factor influenced either labor or management in this situation is impossible to determine.

At some point which was not clearly defined, it was discovered that some of the employees who had worked on the actual removal of the solder glass equipment were reported as having "lead poisoning". These men worked for a contractor identified to me only by the name "Auburndale". Whether they actually had classic lead poisoning or only elevated blood lead levels could not be determined at this time. The work had already been completed and the contractor had left the site prior to my visit.

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After the cases of lead poisoning were reported, another meeting was held, following which a program of periodic blood lead examinations for all employees in the old and new solder glass areas was announced and implemented. According to Mr. Mapes this completely satisfied the employees and they now desired no further action from the Division. I asked him if he thought air samples collected in the current work areas would be of any use, but he said that he thought the blood leads were sufficient. I then concluded the interview.

Next, I spoke with Tom Myers, foreman for Colgan Electric Co. He confirmed what Mr. Mapes had said and that the blood lead levels were being checked with the results being made available to the employees and their personal physicians.

Finally, I held a brief closing conference with Mr. Speelman. He stated that if nothing requiring action on their part was generated, Owens Illinois did not wish to receive any report concerning this visit. During this conference I also obtained the necessary statistical information such as number of employees, Risk No., etc. from Mr. Speelman.

In conclusion, it appears that the employees had a legitimate complaint concerning a health hazard at the plant, but that has now been adequately dealt with. Due to the transient working conditions at the plant, the monitoring of blood lead levels is probably the most effective means to protect the employees.

RM/jm

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