

1234B

MOC00044956

Benzene / Exposure Studies

Potential Public Issues

- Background on China, apparel industry
- Issues overview
- Summary

American Petroleum Institute
Benzene Task Force
August 31, 2000
Lynn B. Russo

China

- Complex, sophisticated society undergoing substantial political and economic change
 - Shanghai an important city politically and economically
 - Recent political changes include village - elections
 - Interested in learning from outside experts for adaptation to Chinese system
- Approach to work place regulation complex
 - Manufacturers can set expectations for contracted plants
 - China's health agency addresses benzene exposure
- Apparel industry has been an NGO focus area

Apparel Industry Focus of NGO Attention

- Critiques of Asian factories/plants focused on U.S. brands
 - NGO's and labor address wide variety of issue
 - Fair Labor Practices Association to begin plant monitoring
 - Industry has not addressed common standards
- Benzene exposure levels at shoe assembly plants is a recognized issue
 - Local workers aware of differences among adhesives
 - U.S. manufacturers moving toward water-based adhesives
 - Some interest from regulatory authorities in China

Public Policy Issues to be Addressed

- Political considerations: ensure appropriate entities involved/informed
 - Interrelationship among government entities in China
 - Impact on plants, companies outside Shanghai (China and other Asian countries)
 - Communications about studies
- Industry considerations: reach out to U.S./European companies
 - Role of apparel companies
 - Evolution of voluntary standards during studies
 - Impact on other industries (local plants and international contractors, suppliers)
- "Regulatory" considerations: participate in initiatives for regulatory change
 - International regulatory initiatives (ILO)
 - Potential changes in China's approach
- NGO community: communicate with key NGO's

Conditions Required to Address Public Issues

- Ethical issues addressed in responsible / defensible manner
- Industry funders agree to participate in debate on benzene exposure levels
- Handling of interim reports and communications are addressed by consortium
- Means of incorporating non-U.S. expertise is identified
- Resources are identified for Public Affairs program