

Goodrich confirms fifth cancer death related to effects of vinyl chloride

By DONALD M. HOUGHTON

Staff Writer

Goodrich Staff Writers

The B. F. Goodrich Co. today confirmed a fifth death of a worker from cancer of the liver — instead of the previously reported four.

The confirmation came after a comprehensive review of the company's records, indicating that a fifth death of the liver cancer had occurred in 1964. The company had previously acknowledged the death previously acknowledged by the company.

A spokesman said that while all deaths of employees at the plant have been checked since the company began recognizing a possible link between its vinyl- and polyvinylchloride operations and angiosarcoma in January, the 1964 death was not included in the review.

He said the review was done by "non-union" people for "internal pressure." Another "internal" review of the death records is now under way, he said.

Meanwhile, company officials have acknowledged that leaks of vinyl chloride and another toxic gas related to vinyl chloride, vinylidene, are still occurring at the B.F. Goodrich plant from time to time.

The officials admit that the levels of exposure to vinyl chloride may be four or more times as high as the maximum level of 50 parts of one gas to a million parts of air the company has said it maintains here.

However, they continue to stress that the exposure rates are well below the maximum of 500 parts per million permitted by government standards—standards that are now being revised downward.

And the exposure levels to vinylidene have run as much as 50 times the 20 parts

per million permitted by the same government standards, according to the company readings. However, the plant manager, Phil Lawrence, claims he has not seen levels as high as "several hundred" parts per million, although he has seen levels as high as "several hundred."

The known toxicity of vinyl chloride and vinylidene has been noted in a by the U.S. government in 1964 and 1965, and in 1965 in a state workers' compensation case. Goodrich worker, who ultimately died of angiosarcoma last year.

In that case, Dr. Will W. Ward Jr., a Louisville physician, said his patient had

been exposed to these chemicals and that medical evidence showed studies of the chemicals causing liver disease in some animals.

While Ward and other medical authorities doubt that the man had angiosarcoma or even liver cancer in 1964 and 1965, the Louisville doctor testified in the workers' compensation case that the man was known to have "had definite abnormal liver functions (as the result of tests) done by the B. F. Goodrich Co. in the summer of 1964 and 1965." Ward said why he was allowed to work in a

See GOODRICH

Back page, col. 3, this section

Goodrich confirms death of 34th vinyl worker

Continued From Page One

potentially hazardous situation beyond that."

The company claims that it immediately removes persons with known liver problems from exposure to hydrocarbons such as vinyl chloride, but in the case of this

worker, the man was not moved until after the compensation case was well under way. The company spoke man was unable to specify on what date the man was moved to another department.

After he was moved, however, Dr. Ward reported a major recovery in the man's liver. In 1971 the case was reopened because of the man's liver. In 1971 the case was reopened because of the man's worsening condition. Dr. Ward said a tumor was present by at least late 1970 and that repeated hospital stays and invasive tests were undertaken. The man died in March last year.

In the original workmen's compensation case filed in 1964, the man had sought to be paid about other men who worked with him who had suffered liver problems, but a Goodrich attorney objected and the matter was not pursued. The company fought the original case for more than a year and initially resisted the reopening of the case in 1971. Eventually, however, the company changed its position and agreed to the payments.

Tests began in 1963

The company's liver tests of its vinyl-chloride employees here began in 1963. The first two tests on the man whose case

is detailed here showed normal liver functions. However, tests administered by the company in July 15, 1964, and July 17, 1964, found an "abnormal" condition, according to the case records. Subsequent tests indicating a return to normal on Aug. 8, 1964, and Feb. 19, 1965, were ruled invalid, according to a note on the record pointing out that there was too much blood lysis in the serum used to obtain an accurate result.

In this case, the workmen's compensation cases resulted in payments of \$38 a week from Feb. 3, 1964, to Feb. 16, 1964, and May 2, 1965, to Oct. 8, 1965, plus \$25 a week for 14 to 100 week beginning Jan. 2, 1964. After the condition worsened again, the claim allowed \$20.75 a week for 30 5/7 weeks through Sept.

14, 1971 and then \$38 a week for 25 weeks through Feb. 22, 1972, plus medical expenses.

Throughout the period of treatment the man was given large quantities of chemicals to fight off the very aggressive hepatitis. Ultimately he "bled to death," Dr. Ward reported.

The Goodrich spoke man, representatives of the public relations department at the company's Akron, Ohio, headquarters, were given the specifics of the man's claim and its handling last week. They had been unable to obtain the necessary information to respond by today, one of them said.