

Head of union seeks new limits on vinyl chloride

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WASHINGTON — Temporary emergency health standards limiting exposure to vinyl chloride are inadequate to guarantee workers safety, United Rubber Workers president Peter Bommarito said yesterday.

He called for tighter government restrictions on the chemical, which is believed responsible for a rare form of liver cancer.

The Labor Department's Occupational Safety and Health Administration has ordered that the maximum allowable concentration of vinyl chloride be reduced from 500 parts per million in the atmosphere to 50 parts per million until a permanent standard is formulated.

(The agency acted after reports of nine deaths of chemical workers at American plants, including the Bells Lane plant of the B. F. Goodrich Co. in Louisville, from the cancer known as angiosarcoma. Several plants moved to a voluntary maximum-exposure level of 50 parts per million before the government acted.)

Bommarito said the deaths "served the brutal purpose" of showing how little is known about the dangers of many chemicals.

Speaking at a one-day health and safety meeting sponsored by the union, he said, "It has uncovered what industry, government and labor do not know—the toxicological and cancer potential of thousands of chemicals used in industry."

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