

FILE NAME: Powhatan (PHN)

DATE: 1962

DOC#: PHN018

DOCUMENT DESCRIPTION: Govt Inspection Reports

DIVISION OF OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH
INVESTIGATION OR SERVICE

Date 31 Jan 62 By DR

Plant Powhatan Mining Co. Industry Manufacturing Asbestos Fiber
Address Weston County Bedford
Number of Employees: Male 10 Female 2 Total 12

Purpose	Number Involved	Persons Interviewed	Reason
Survey		<u>Fred H. Matt</u>	Self initiated <u>X</u>
<u>X</u> Reinspection	<u>12</u>	<u>Quinn</u>	O. D. Report
Study			Complaint-Request
Follow-up		Occupational Disease	Management
Consultation		<u>None</u>	Labor
Special Activity			Neighbors
Project Activity			Health Office
			Other

Recommendations Regarding Environmental Problems

Problems	Number Affected	Requested Improvement
New		
Asbestosis None	10	Make complete plant survey for "Asbestosis" hazards at this time.
Past - Completed		
Uncompleted		Wearing of approved B.M. respirator by bagger.

Field Studies:

No. Involved

None

Samples submitted for analysis: None

Memo ✓; Plant Record —; Letter/Report — rec; Next Visit 7/62
to: Reviewed B

Mr. Matt
requesting date for survey

Powhatan Mining Company

Rock (probably a Chrysotile variety of Serpentine) is processed at the rate of two tons per day to produce asbestos. The raw rock contains from 70-90% asbestos; it is procured from southern domestic sources.

Over 20 previous visits have been made to this plant; operations and procedures have been so fully described that further repetition is unnecessary.

All areas were visited; in sequence, they are:

Grinding and Crushing (Fiberizing or Shredding):

Not in operation. Loose asbestos is produced.

Screening (Separation of Fines and Coarse):

Smoke-tube tests indicate good local exhaust. A Dustfoe, (BM-2166A) respirator is worn by operator; this is brand new and shiny and I felt it is put on for my visit.

Bagging:

Asbestos is bagged on the first floor. Although this operation was not being carried out, holes in the fabric of the conducting systems indicate appreciable escape of asbestos dust when in use.

Fines and sands are bagged in the basement. No operations were being performed here; smoke-tube tests indicate good local-exhaust ventilation in the general bagging area; tests of the specific breathing area (during a non-operative period) are considered meaningless.

Extraction (for Special Uses):

A steam-heated HCl extraction is carried on outside. The extracted material is parted by barrow to a small building for aqueous extraction of HCl and chlorides. Dust respirators, not gloves or acid-proof glasses, are worn over the well-water washing tanks. Drying, on racks in a steam-heated cabinet, presents no hazards.

Screening (Extracted Asbestos):

This operation was not being done. It is performed by forcing the dried material, by hand, through a wire screen. No local-ventilation facilities are present.

Packing (Extracted Asbestos):

Operation was not in progress.

GENERAL:

The history of this plant from March of 1941 to the present time, and covered by over 20 industrial health examinations, is one of a hazardous environment. Conditions have been universally bad and repeated recommendations for their improvement have been only partially completed, or ignored. Three cases of suspected asbestosis, one of these being uncontested and costing the insurance company \$20,000, emphasize the need for positive corrective action in this plant. Basic contributory factors are:

Medical:

Adequate medical supervision is lacking. It is felt that the initial physical examination is not supplemented by the close medical surveillance necessary in this type of work; readings of the chest x-rays should be made by a trained roentgenologist, specializing in lung diseases. Positive or doubtful findings should be referred to an M.D., also specializing in lung diseases, for close control and supervision.

Ventilation:

Although some operations were not being conducted at the time of visit, visual observations of the system disclosed holes in the exhaust ducts and a lack of upkeep. The plant history indicates no effort in this direction until a death, and only sporadic and piecemeal attempts since then. The use of respirators, recommended many many times (and ignored just as many times) is inherently a secondary measure; it is only a "back-up" procedure for unsatisfactory ventilation.

Sanitation:

Features in this area contributing to the undesirable picture may be divided into two basic divisions. The first, and least important, is the refusal of Mr. Mett, despite numerous recommendations, to replace the outside privy with a more-sanitary and aesthetic means of human sewage disposal. Since, at the time of visit, the privy was well policed and since, in effect, privies in good condition are permitted by the CHO, it is advisable to withdraw this recommendation; continued repetition and continued ignorals have rendered it meaningless.

The second, and most important, aspect of sanitary shortcomings is absence of wash facilities. No wash basins, soap, or towels are provided in the plant; a make shift shower is never used. As a result, the personal-hygiene measures essential for ameliorating dust contamination are lacking.

Owner's Attitude:

This is one of intransigence. No real effort is, or has been, made to comply with repeated recommendations on ventilation repair, sanitation, use of respirators, and correction of working conditions. The fact that "the men won't do it" is a poor excuse for not assuming responsibility (legally the owners) for providing, and assuring the use of, all necessary safeguards and personnel-protective measures in this hazardous plant. Evasions and passive resistance will not solve this problem.

Conclusions:

1. It is felt, that a definite "asbestosis" hazard exists in this plant at the present time.
2. A complete survey of this plant in operation (promised in letter of WFR under date of January 13, 1960) should be made.
3. If warranted by the survey, only valid and well-backed recommendations should be made, on our specific areas of interest. Such recommendations should be positive, emphatic, and realistically capable of enforcement. Repetition of recommendations, never heeded, serves only to weaken their effects and to negate our position in making them.
4. Should noncompliance or indifference to such recommendations be present after a six month period, a copy of the survey (including the recommendations), with as much pertinent information from the company file history as necessary, should be sent to the Workmens' Compensation Insurance carrier for the company.

DR*gsh

4-2-62

DR

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* demonstrates abject lack of clout by M.D. state authorities, 7 years after one of the workers died with asbestosis.

April 6, 1962

Mr. Fred A. Mett, Owner
Powhatan Mining Company
Woodlawn, Baltimore County, Md.

Dear Mr. Mett:

Thank you for the courtesy shown to the representative
of this Division on his inspection of your plant
January 31, 1962.

We would like to reexamine your plant when it is on a
more fully-operative basis, especially when bagging,
and packing of the hand-screen washed asbestos, is being
done. It would be especially desirable if we could make
our visit when all phases of your operations are in progress.

Will it be possible for you to suggest a time when the
above conditions will be in effect and when we may come
and reinspect your plant?

Very truly yours,

James A. Beegan, Public Health Engineer
Division of Occupational Health

JAB:gh
DR

POWHATAN MINING COMPANY

ACID PROOF ★ *Powminco Asbestos* ★ DIELECTRIC

6721 WINDSOR MILL ROAD - BALTIMORE 7, MARYLAND, U. S. A.

April 9, 1962.

Mr. James A. Beegan, Public Health Engineer
Division of Occupational Health
Department of Health
301 W. Preston St.
Baltimore, 1, Maryland

Dear Mr. Beegan:

Your letter of April 6th to Mr. Fred A. Mett has been received.

Mr. Mett is out of town on a business trip and is not expected to return until the week of April 22. Mr. Mett will write you upon his return to the office.

Thank you.

Yours very truly,

POWHATAN MINING COMPANY

Frances E. Mett
(Miss) Frances E. Mett
Secretary

FEM:pmc

