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UNION CARBIDE CORPORATION
Specialty Chemicals — Sistersville Plant

On Tuesday, October 20, 1987, Robert N. Sawyer, M.D., FACPM presented a program on Asbestos. He discussed briefly the reasons for current employee exposure limits and provided in-depth discussion on the health effects and epidemiology related to asbestos. During his discussions he emphasized that long-term exposure to asbestos fibers at a level above the current permissible exposure limit could result in several different chronic health conditions; primarily a fibrosis of lung tissue (asbestosis) and to a lesser degree cancer of the lung. Such conditions do not occur as a result of a single fiber or short-term low dose exposure, according to Dr. Sawyer. However, the potential of developing these conditions if a person smokes tobacco is 50 times greater than the potential for a non-smoker with the same exposure levels, as illustrated by the data presented during the session.

Preliminary discussions between Dr. Sawyer, Jim Burke, President of Local 698 of the International Chemical Workers Union and also an insulator at the Sistersville Plant, and members of the Sistersville Plant Management, Safety and Health Department and Specialty Chemicals Division HS & EA Management covered such topics as the type of asbestos mineral fiber used at Sistersville in the past, personal protective equipment used in asbestos abatement projects, and asbestos handling procedures followed at Sistersville in general. It was noted that to date only chrysotile asbestos mineral fibers have been found to exist at Sistersville; this is the least harmful asbestos mineral type in relation to the other possible asbestos fiber types used elsewhere in the world. Dr. Sawyer pointed out that our asbestos handling procedure exceeded federal requirements, while matching those he normally recommends. When asked how a determination should be made regarding removal or encapsulation of existing asbestos insulation, Dr. Sawyer responded by saying that unless the insulation is either 1) on a piece of equipment equiring frequent maintenance (or disturbance of the insulation) or 2) is in such bad condition as to not be repairable, it should be properly sealed and left alone. He continued to say that the biggest mistake in asbestos abatement today is the unnecessary removal of sound, safe, well encapsulated asbestos insulation, since greater potential health hazards can be created during the abatement process than by following a policy of maintaining the insulation in a good state of repair.

Dr. Sawyer is a nationally recognized expert and consultant in the asbestos abatement and preventive medicine field. A graduate of Massachusetts Institute of Technology with a B.S. in Engineering and Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine, he completed post-doctoral research at Yale University School of Medicine in the field of Epidemiology and Public Health in 1970 and earned certification from the American Board of Preventive Medicine in 1972. Since that time Dr. Sawyer has served in numerous capacities in his areas of specialty for various medical schools and in the U. S. Naval Submarine Corps. He has authored and co-authored multiple articles for prestigious medical and engineering journals and served in a consultant capacity for the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency on Asbestos Abatement in recent years.

A video tape of Dr. Sawyers presentation is currently being prepared and will be available for viewing by all personnel in the near future.

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