



REYNOLDS ALUMINUM

REYNOLDS METALS COMPANY • RICHMOND, VIRGINIA 23261

November 10, 1982

Mr. Seymour G. Epstein
Technical Director
Safety & Health
The Aluminum Association
818 Connecticut Ave., N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20006

Dear Sey:

With the bankruptcy of Johns Manville and the huge judgments against some of the shipbuilding industry, asbestosis has become the disease of the year.

The first permanent OSHA regulation governs the exposure to asbestos and the required monitoring of the work place. Additionally, notification is required to workers who have been exposed over the limit. Annual physical examinations are mandated for workers with significant exposure. As a result, asbestos exposure in aluminum plants handling molten metal has been thoroughly studied and the workers are well aware of the results.

Over the past several years much of the previous usage of asbestos has been eliminated. Excellent substitutes containing silicates have been fabricated. Some plants have substituted extensively and very successfully. Other plants have not felt this was possible. It would seem to me that the overriding consideration is the health of the worker, and therefore the Health Committee should take the initiative in developing an asbestos replacement program in the aluminum industry. It is my feeling that there is enough technology presently available to enable us to substitute for all of the asbestos applications which cause excessive exposure, and to control the very minimal exposure such as brake shoes and gaskets so that at some point in time we could say no significant asbestos exposure has occurred in our industry after the installation of this program.

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I would propose that this be a task group of the Health Committee with the very important representation and help of the engineers and metallurgists. There should then be a sharing of experience with asbestos substitutes and a very active involvement with the manufacturers and vendors of the substitutes.

My overriding motivation in this effort is to protect the health of the workers, but it must be pointed out that the aluminum industry is experiencing increasing Workmens Compensation claims for asbestosis. (Any chronic pulmonary disease or lung cancer in the exposed worker tends to be considered as asbestosis.) Secondly, not to utilize a feasible healthy substitute for asbestos would be hard to defend in litigation.

Sincerely yours,



E. Claiborne Irby, M.D.
Corporate Medical Director

ECI/aw

CC: Mr. John R. McGill
Mr. H. M. Cole