

Washington Hotline

By Ted Orme

Asbestos Rules

In response to a petition by the AFL-CIO, the U.S. Court of Appeals has ordered OSHA to consider tougher rules on asbestos to better protect the nation's 540,000 workers in the automotive brake and clutch repair industry.

The OSHA standard is now designed to protect all industrial users of asbestos, which causes lung cancer and other lung diseases. But the maximum permissible exposure level allowed by OSHA is about twice that found in most brake and clutch repair facilities.

The Appeals Court said that the effect of more lenient standards "is to deny OSHA protection to those in the automotive repair sector who work in shops with higher-than-average exposure levels. We see no basis for this in the [OSHA] act."

The court noted studies that indicate stricter regulations for asbestos can be set forth, and it ordered OSHA to consider more selective regulation of industrial users where it is "technologically feasible."

But OSHA said that would "drastically alter" the practice of setting regulations for all industrial users of a hazardous material. It could also delay regulations and create a backlog. The agency said it may appeal the ruling.

Alternative Fuels

Just about the time he hit the Iowa primaries, Vice President George Bush announced the approval of regulatory guidelines to the states on the use of alternative fuels, such as natural gas, methanol and ethanol—of which there is plenty in Iowa.

The guide is the final product of the President's Task Force on Regulatory Relief, headed by Bush. "In effect, it will allow cities to clean up their air by using alternative fuels instead of imposing Draconian re-

OSHA asbestos rules leave automotive brake and clutch workers at risk. Also, the trials and tribulations of product liability and health benefits bills.

strictions on the amount that people can drive," said Bush's office. It would also be an economic boon to hard-hit agricultural states.

The report concludes that reductions of ozone-forming emissions of up to 80 percent are possible with the use of pure methanol and up to 40 percent with compressed natural gas. Carbon monoxide reductions of up to 35 percent are also possible with the use of gasoline-oxygenate blends, such as mixtures of gasoline and ethanol (gasohol), methanol or methyl tertiary butyl ether.

Increases in the use of methanol and natural gas also could lessen the problem of acid rain by reducing NO_x emissions. However, data on fuel blends show a potential for

increases in evaporative hydrocarbon emissions, specifically those that raise volatility.

All in all, the report should add to the momentum of several bills in Congress aimed at increasing the use of alternative fuels as an anti-pollution measure and as a possible solution for CAFE problems being experienced by Ford and GM.

Product Liability Bill

Hope springs eternal for a product liability bill (H.R.1115) that recently made it out of its subcommittee to the full House Energy and Commerce Committee. That's a big step for manufacturers and wholesalers who have been working for this long-overdue legislation in one form or another since the mid-1970s.

The very controversial and emotional legislation contains several compromises designed to reduce the vehement opposition by consumer and trial lawyers' groups, who have contended in the past that product liability legislation was nothing more than an attempt

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Enclosure equipment for brake cleaning slips over the brake assembly and forms a tight seal. A vacuum system then sucks up the brake dust and exhausts filtered air.

Wallet-Thinning Measure

- The Justice Department just gave its OK to Petro-credit Corporation to issue a universal gasoline credit card through banks and oil companies. The card would carry a \$10-\$20 annual fee and be good at any station.

Carry And Cash

- Most exhibitors at trade shows offer deals on display equipment to avoid paying to ship the stuff back. At the APAA show in Chicago last month, exhibitors donated leftovers to Project TEAM (Training and Educating Automotive Mechanics). Project TEAM sold the merchandise and used the money to train low-income Chicagoans to become entry-level mechanics.

Engineers Dispute Asbestos Ban

- The American Society of Mechanical Engineers urged the government to hold off on its proposed ban of asbestos products. The society questioned the safety of substituting non-asbestos materials in brake systems that were designed for asbestos.

Non-asbestos friction materials are being used safely in new brake systems specifically designed for the materials. The EPA, however, has proposed a total ban on the manufacture and import of asbestos products, which means that the asbestos brake linings and pads on existing cars and trucks would be replaced with non-asbestos friction materials.

Aftermarket friction materials manufacturers are

Audi Futures

- INGOLSTADT, West Germany—Along with its redesigned 80 and 90 models that will replace the aging 4000 and 4000 Quattros late this year, Audi is planning a variety of new products to reaffirm its slogan of "advancement through technology."

While the projected cars are part of the normal multi-year development cycle of an automaker, the advance publicity is unusual for a German company. It was provided, according to insiders, to bolster Audi's sagging image, damaged in the United States from unintended acceleration charges that to date remain unproven.

At an exclusive session for North American journalists, Audi vice-chairman Dr. Ferdinand Piech skipped over the new 1988 80 and 90 compact sedans and spoke instead of cars and components that will not reach the U.S. market until 1989 at the earliest.

On a turntable in Audi's research and development center was a bright red styling mock-up of a two-door coupe based on the new 80 platform. The car, which takes some of its shape from the rounded styling of the 5000, will not be released in Europe until sometime in 1988, with U.S. versions to follow in 1989. At this early date, Dr. Piech explained, the company is "still struggling" to decide whether to offer the coupe in front-wheel-drive or four-wheel-drive versions.

To the left of the coupe was a European version of the 5000 (called the 100 and 200 there) with a redone interior. A quick inspection revealed a dash with a large tach on the left, flanked on the right by speedometer, oil pressure and temperature, water temperature, and fuel gauges.

The new dash layout, particularly the quality of the wood trim, was reminiscent of a Mercedes. This should answer complaints about the cheapness of Audi interiors. "Instead of living rooms, too often in the past our interiors looked like bathrooms," Piech admitted to MOTOR Magazine. After all, a Mercedes has never been likened to a single room. If anything, the expensive sedan has been likened to a house.

The aluminum V8 engine on display seemed more original, even though its block is made by



The new Audi 4000s due this fall will get away from the "000" name and retain the European designations: The four-cylinder model will be called the Audi 80; the five-cylinder, the Audi 90.

Schmidt and Mahle, suppliers to Mercedes and Porsche. The 3.6-liter V6, 32-valve, fuel-injected powerplant will provide a Corvette-threatening 250 hp in its federalized no-lead form. That's about the same power as the 245-hp, 5.7-liter 1988 Corvette but with only 63% of the displacement.

Audi's excellent output of 69 horsepower per liter (versus 43 per liter for the 'Vette) is possible because of engineering refinements such as two overhead camshafts on each cylinder bank, four valves per cylinder, and a Bosch Motronic engine management system that combines electronic ignition, knock sensing and port fuel injection.

The V8 will power a new unnamed model that will be larger and more expensive (of course) than the 5000 series. Piech refused to divulge more except to say the car will be a four-door hatchback with four-wheel drive.

A couple of mornings later at breakfast before a test drive in Algeria, Piech hinted at an upcoming limited-production car. Frankly coveting Porsche's publicity triumph with the 959—it made the covers of *Car and Driver*, *Motor Trend* and *Road & Track*—Piech promised an expensive custom Audi of about 100 units. He claimed the super-Audi would be announced within the next six months. What Piech didn't mention was the production nightmare of building fabulously complex cars. Porsche has managed to build only a few of the promised 250 units since the 959 was announced more than a year ago. We'll have to wait and see whether Audi can whip the production woes. —Kenneth Zino

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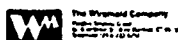


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What's News

not required to show that their products meet the federal standards, nor are they required to give out test data. Consequently there is little real-world data available on substituting materials. Without such information, the society felt it was premature to ban all asbestos products.

"You cannot assume that just any non-asbestos material will work in a braking system designed for asbestos," said panel member Scott Barber of Battelle. "Nor will a material performing satisfactorily in the laboratory necessarily provide safe braking in a vehicle."

Complaints

• Automobile repair shops ranked third on the complaint lists of the Better Business Bureau offices across the country. The most-complained-about industry in 1986 was mail order products (15.02% of all complaints), followed by home remodeling and improvement companies (10.05%). Auto repair shops triggered 5.99% of complaints, or a total of 28,127.

On the other hand, 204,018 people requested information about auto repair shops from the BBB. Since so many people use the BBB to screen shops they do business with, it would pay to resolve any problems with customers and avoid a potential black mark against your shop at your local BBB.

Permanent Fixes

• A tire manufacturer recommends following up an emergency external plug tire repair with a vulcanized inside patch as soon as possible.

"The externally applied plug may allow air to seep from a tire, causing underinflation," said Fred Fuest, consumer affairs director with Armstrong Tire. "This, in turn, can result in excessive flexing of the tire and heat buildup, which increases stress and can cause tire failure."

Schedule of Events

National Automotive Radiator Service Assn.—Central Regional Conference	Stouffer Inn on the Square Cleveland, OH	Sept. 25-28
Automotive Parts Rebuilders Assn.—Convention & Exposition	Various Hotel/ Salt Palace Salt Lake City, UT	Sept. 27-30
Paint, Body & Equipment Assn.—Conference	Alameda Plaza Kansas City, MO	Sept. 27-Oct. 1
Hand Tools Institute—Meeting	Sheraton Grand Hotel Washington, DC	Sept. 29-Oct. 1
Engine Service Association—Meeting	San Diego Hilton San Diego, CA	Oct. 4-8
National Automotive Radiator Service Assn.—Regional Conference	Americana Dutch Resort Lake Buena Vista, FL	Oct. 8-11