

COMPANY, GOVERNMENT TIGHTEN SAFETY ON JOB EXPOSURE TO VINYL CHLORIDE

Extra precautionary measures to reduce employee exposure to vinyl chloride to a minimum have been put into practice at a B. F. Goodrich Company plant in Louisville, Ky. At the same time, the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health announced a crash research program to determine possible occupational health hazards of vinyl chloride.

Both moves came shortly after the company announced that six employees at its Louisville plant have contracted angiosarcoma, a rare liver cancer, that may have been caused by exposure to substances involved in the manufacture of polyvinyl chloride. The disease has proven fatal to five of the employees.

In a more recent development, the Kentucky Occupational Safety and Health Standards Board has added vinyl chloride to its list of occupational cancer-causing agents.

OSHA WANTS ADVICE

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration is considering a standard for occupational exposure to inorganic mercury. Public comment is invited on whether a new standard is needed on the basis of government criteria or other information. Replies should be sent to: Office of Standards, OSHA, U. S. Dept. of Labor, Rm. 504, 400 First St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20210 before March 25, 1974.

The board also has recommended that the present exposure ceiling of 500 parts per million be reduced to 75 ppm, with a normal threshold of 50 ppm averaged over an eight-hour workday.

The board recognized that in certain operations, such as cleaning inside mixing tanks, vinyl chloride fumes are more concentrated than the proposed limit. In such situations, the board recommended, exposure to more than 200 ppm "without proper protective equipment shall constitute an imminent danger."

If adopted, the proposed regulations could go into effect by the end of March.

Goodrich said that measures being taken at Louisville include some of its own initiative, and others suggested by the government. The company says it is in compliance with federal and state guidelines. NIOSH has made the following recommendations:

- Housekeeping—Resin should be stored in closed containers. Eating facilities should be separated from the work area.
- Clothing—Protective clothing, including coveralls, should be provided all employees. Those working in mixing tanks should wear impervious suits.
- Showers—All employees in the polymerization process should take showers after completing work.
- Monitoring—To determine where leaks occur, monitoring should be carried on throughout the work environment.
- Respiratory protection—All employees transferring vinyl chloride should be provided self-contained breathing apparatus and those working in tanks should have air-supplied respirators.

Getting underway at NIOSH is a study of employees at plants that have had polyvinyl chloride operations for 15 years or more. The study will include employees with varying lengths of exposure.

NIOSH also is looking for other diseases that may result from exposure to vinyl chloride. Part of its efforts will involve animal toxicological studies with the National Cancer Institute.



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PUBLIC RELATIONS

HEALTH NEWS

There have been several rumors that indicate there are other cases that have been diagnosed as angiosarcoma other than those previously mentioned. These rumors are false. There have been no other cases diagnosed as angiosarcoma. Further testing and evaluation is continuing. Certain employees have been hospitalized for further testing but there have been no other findings of angiosarcoma.

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Industrial Relations Department

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