Health, Safety and
Toxicology Department
Industrial Chemicals Group

GRACE

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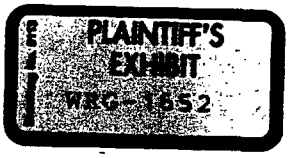
May 8, 1979



Richard Irons, M.D.
Kootenai Clinic
503 Idaho
Libby, MT 59923

Dear Dr. Irons:

The purpose of my letter is to provide for you an update on the progress we have made in our employee health program at the Libby mine and mill and to specifically respond to some of the issues raised in your letter of April 3, 1979. As we discussed in December, we have developed and are in the process of installing a health monitoring program. The program includes the following annual monitoring: Pulmonary function testing to include FVC, $FEV_{1.0}$, FEF 25-75%, sputum cytology, a P-A chest x-ray, and a comprehensive questionnaire to be completed by the employee. The data from each of these will be stored in a computer and each employee will be compared to his peers as well as his own previous tests. Based upon the computer determinations, employees will be referred to a local physician for further evaluation. We hope to improve this program as we gain experience. We anticipate your cooperation as employees are referred to you and personal physicians of their choice.

In addition to this medical program, we have a continuing extensive air monitoring program and our airborne concentrations are well below those standards by the Mine Safety and Health Administration.

The third part of our program is employee education. We are proceeding with multimedia seminars and hope to include a program to help employees to stop smoking. The remote location of Libby is a difficulty if one wants to use one of the commercially available "no smoke" courses. However, we hope to solve this problem shortly.

The quieries made recently in Libby by our toxicologist, Harold H. Borgstedt, M.D., were not supposed to be an in-depth study of tremolite health problems but rather a quick survey to see if there was an incidence of a specific lung problem in which we were interested. We were not trying to do an involved retrospective study on the telephone, but rather to get a rough feel for a specific situation.

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The health problems resulting from exposure to tremolite are well-characterized and do not differ significantly from those caused by other forms of asbestos with the possible exception of mesothelioma which does not appear to be associated with it. Based upon this, we have, in the case of affected employees, helped them to initiate claims for Workmen's Compensation benefits. As you are well aware, the disease that we see today is the result of exposures which occurred many years ago, and unfortunately, the results of the changes which we have made will not be apparent for some years because of this "lag time". We find this extremely frustrating as I am sure you do as a medical person.

I will be in Libby from the 14th through the 16th of May and would be happy to discuss this situation with you further. If you so desire, please contact me at the W. R. Grace office or the Venture Inn.

Thank you for your interest.

Yours truly,

Henry A. Eschenbach
Director of Health,
Safety & Toxicology

HAE:sg

bcc: J. W. Wolter
R. L. Oliverio/Libby