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August 26, 1975

Mr. E.W. Duffy
U.S. Gypsum Co.
101 South Wacker Drive
Chicago, Illinois 60606

Dear Sir:

I have used your company's products for several years. Most recently, I have been making extensive use of your "Texolite Spackling Putty", as in June I bought a fifty year old house which has many cracked walls and moldings. I also removed an old medicine chest and filled the resulting space with plaster and a surface coating of spackle. In all this work I have used a disc sander to give a smooth finish prior to painting.

On Saturday evening, August 23rd, I was astounded to hear on an evening TV newscast a warning that some spackling compounds contain asbestos fibers, and advising the public not to sand these compounds due to likely injurious consequences.

On Monday morning I called the U.S. Consumer Products Safety Commission for verification of the facts mentioned on the program. They verified the fact that your product did indeed contain asbestos, and that they were considering requiring your firm to post a warning of asbestos content on the box. The USCPSC also advised me that the New York Times had carried an article on August 8 regarding studies made by a team of doctors at Mount Sinai Hospital's School of Environmental Medicine which pointed out the serious dangers to the public lurking in spackling compounds due to their asbestos content.

By this time deeply concerned and angry at what I had learned, I contacted the School of Medicine and talked to Drs. Selikoff and Rohl, two of the research team which had worked on the asbestos study. They both agreed that samples of your company's spackling compound that they had tested had shown a very high asbestos content, often as much as 10%. By now extremely worried, I described my usage of your product and asked for an opinion on what possible harm could have been caused by the ingestion into my lungs of the asbestos fibers from it. They replied that, although it is known to be carcinogenic, there is no established tolerance level for this mineral. All that is known is that the wives and children of asbestos workers have contracted tumors merely from coming in contact with the clothing of these workers, which contained small amounts of asbestos dust. They further stated that even minute amounts of asbestos ingested into the lungs were carcinogenic time bombs, whose possibly deadly effect might not become evident for twenty years or more. They advised me to discontinue use of your product at once.

I find it difficult to believe that a major company such as yours could be so callous and indifferent to the public safety as to put on the market a product loaded with a carcinogenic agent without any written warning as to its potentially deadly contents and proper use. Because of what I must assume to be your company's indifference to our welfare, myself and my wife, who is four months pregnant, as well as countless others who have used your product, have unwittingly been exposed to an extremely hazardous substance.

What I would like answered by you sir, as director of your corporation's policies, are the following:

1. Were you personally aware that your company's "Texolite" Spackling Putty contained high percentages of asbestos fibers?

2. Were you aware that asbestos has been found, in several governmental and independent studies to be indisputably a carcinogenic agent, and that wide publicity has been given to these findings in the various public media?

I believe sir, in the light of what has occured, that I am entitled to a prompt and forthright answer to these questions.

Very truly yours,

Ralph Georgalis
16 North Road
Great Neck, New York 11024

RG:rs
cc: U.S. Consumer Products Safety Commission