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August 4, 1980

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Dr. John Stafford
Imperial Chemicals Industries, Ltd.
Plastics Division
P. O. Box No. 6 Bessemer Road
Welwyn Garden City
Hertfordshire AL71HD
England

Subject: [redacted] Tumors
[redacted]
[redacted] City, Texas

Dear John,

Knowing your great interest in the subject I am sending you the following items:

1. Clipping from The Washington Post dated July 24, 1980 on "Cancer Outbreak Found at Two Texas Plants".

2. Alexander, Victor, M.D. - "Brain Cancer in Petrochemical Workers - A Case Series Report Draft VI" Occupational Safety and Health Administration, U. S. Dept. of Labor, Washington, D. C., May 1980.

   This draft report and UCC comments are for your information only. Table 5 showing recognized and suspect carcinogens at the plant is misleading. Acrylonitrile, dioxane, hydrazine and vinylidene chloride are over-emphasized and should not be viewed as universal factors at the plant.

3. Lasagna, L., "Statistics: A New Co-Carcinogen", The Sciences, May/June 1980.

   This has no bearing on the subject, but it might be interesting.

UCC
022077

4. Chemical Regulation Reported dated July 18, 1980 "Citizen Petition Seeks Regulation, Cites Carcinogenicity of Plasticizer"

We appear to have a developing furore on di 2 ethyl hexylphthalate and other vinyl plasticizers. If you have any news or data in the European area, please let us know.

Very truly yours,

R. N. Wheeler Jr

R. N. Wheeler, Jr.
Assistant Director
Product Safety

RNWJr./rhw

Enclosures

cc: Dr. T. R. Torkleson

chemclips

Date:
JUL 24 1980

Compiled by Jane Rasmussen • 202/328-4229
Chemical Manufacturers Association, 1825 Connecticut Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009

THE WASHINGTON POST Thursday, July 24, 1980

Cancer Outbreak Found at 2 Texas Plants

By Victor Cohn and Joanne Omang
Washington Post Staff Writers

A serious outbreak of brain cancer has been discovered in two Texas petrochemical plants, and federal officials fear they may find a high incidence of brain cancer elsewhere in the huge industry that makes chemicals from oil.

In a probe that started in early 1979, 25 brain-tumor cases — 24 of them fatal so far—have been discovered among recent and past workers at a Dow Chemical plant in Freeport, Tex. Eighteen other fatal cases turned up at a Union Carbide plant in Texas City, Tex.

Both plants are in the Houston-Galveston area, which is thickly dotted with plants that make or process petrochemicals. But so far, federal investigators have not been able to pinpoint a guilty chemical—or, more likely, a group of chemicals or a process—though there are several under suspicion.

The brain-cancer incidence among workers in the plants in the last 24 years is twice the normal level in the general population, Dr. Richard Waxweiler of the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) said yesterday.

All of the victims are men. Few women work in the plants.

Investigators from the two federal agencies involved—the Labor Department's Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and the Department of Health and Human Services' NIOSH—have not yet been able to look in detail at other plants, though they have started some investigations.

They have reports, they said, of possible concentrations of similar brain cancers in plants at Beaumont and Port Arthur, Tex.; Charleston, W. Va.; Louisville, and San Francisco, as well as one in Canada.

"There's no reason to suspect all petrochemical plants," Waxweiler said. But Dr. Victor Alexander of OSHA said there may be "five or six others" at least, and J. William Lloyd, OSHA epidemiologist, said, "There may be any number of chemical plants involved."

Spokesmen for Dow and Union Carbide noted that the results so far are inconclusive. "We see no common thread that would suggest [that] exposure to any particular material or location in the plant" is involved, said James Hansen for Dow. "There is nothing so far to connect the workplace to the brain cancer."

Damon Engle, manager of Union Carbide's Texas City plant, agreed that the cancer incidence may be higher than the national average but has not yet been proved higher than incidence in the area. "If it is, we're just as anxious as anybody to get to the bottom of it," he said.

When the study began in 1979, researchers suspected that the cause of the cancers might be vinyl chloride, which is associated with the glioblastoma multiforme type of cancer that is the predominant one being found. But some of the victims had no exposure to vinyl chloride, the NIOSH researchers said.

Tony Mazzochi of the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers Union said preliminary reports from other studies found higher-than-normal rates of brain and stomach cancers among petrochemical workers along the Texas Gulf Coast, and as a result the union and the National Cancer Institute are studying the entire industry. Eventually 60,000 workers will be checked, he said.

"There is a cancer epidemic among American workers and certainly among the workers we represent," Mazzochi said.

Petrochemicals involve more than 30,000 workers in Texas alone and bring in about $3 billion annually, according to state figures. The Houston Chamber of Commerce reported last year that six of every 10 pounds or gallons of U.S. petrochemical production come from the Texas Gulf Coast. Dow's Freeport plant, which covers 4,500 acres and employs 7,000 persons, is the biggest one there.

OSHA and NIOSH officials are planning a joint conference on the problem, possibly in October, involving government industry and the scientific and medical worlds. The situation "is something we didn't know about before," said Dr. Irving Selikoff of Mount Sinai Medical Center in New York.

He is editor of the American Journal of Industrial Medicine, which will soon publish the first scientific report on the outbreak, written by a group headed by Dr. Alexander of OSHA.

"We just don't know how widespread this problem is," said Sheldon Samuels, AFL-CIO director of occupational health and safety. There has been no industrywide study of it, just as "there is no systematic epidemiology yet of the American work force," he said.

But he said the fact that Dr. Eulah Bingham, OSHA director, "put together OSHA's first medical and scientific team" meant OSHA had a skilled team to go to the Union Carbide plant early last year and begin to study the brain tumors.

Alexander headed that first investigation, which was triggered by a complaint in late 1978 from a brain-cancer victim at Union Carbide.

Ironically, that victim's cancer had spread from another part of his body. So he is not officially considered one of the victims.

But it's important for workers to speak up, Waxweiler said. "If we hadn't heard from that worker," he said, "we wouldn't have known about Union Carbide. We wouldn't have known about Dow or any of it."

Working with Texas doctors and health officials and with Union Carbide—a company that has been "highly and unusually cooperative," Alexander said—Alexander found the tumors among 9,000 people who had worked at the Texas City plant since 1956, when the first victim died.

He then investigated "a second plant"—which he would not name—and found five brain tumor deaths. But two of these people had also worked at Union Carbide.

Statisticians at the famed M.D. Anderson Hospital and Tumor Institute in Houston then combed their computerized Texas death records for lists of brain cancer victims and their work records.

This led the investigators to the Dow plant, the site of 25 tumors among more than 30,000 workers since the early 1960s. Studies now are focusing on company records to determine where the men worked and what

(more)

Petrochemicals

chemicals they were exposed to in the vast complex, which makes 200 different products, including antifreeze, chlorine, latex, ethylene, vinyl chloride and other industrial chemical building blocks.

Workers at Union Carbide's plant had jobs "all over the place," Waxweiler said. One of the few common denominators was that 13 of the 18 victims had worked there more than 15 years.

The Texas plant studies and the studies of workers' backgrounds, are still not complete, federal investigators said.

But "we strongly suspect," said Alexander, that the cause of the tumors may be not a single chemical but "a chemical process"—exposure to all or some of the many steps that lead to a single chemical product. Or, he said it may be more than one process involving the 300 or so chemicals commonly found in a modern petrochemical factory.

NY Times 7/24

Louisiana Waters Searched For Toxic-Chemical Drums

SHELL BEACH, La., July 23 (AP) — The Coast Guard searched a Mississippi River waterway near here today for more than 150 drums of hazardous chemicals whose potential danger led to the closing of an outlet to the Gulf of Mexico.

The drums went into the water last night from the cargo ship Testbank after she collided with the Sea Daniel, a Panamanian ore carrier, the Coast Guard said. No injuries were reported in the collision about 25 miles southeast of New Orleans.

Missing from the Testbank were 63 drums of hydrobromic acid and a cargo ship container holding 99 drums of pentachlorophenol. The hydrobromic acid forms a poisonous gas when it is combined with water, but the gas dissipates quickly in open air, the Coast Guard said.

Washington Post 7/24

U.S. Accuses Chemical Maker

CHICAGO—The federal government wants to hold Monsanto Corp. liable for contaminating Lake Michigan by selling a toxic chemical to a lakeside maker of boat motors.

Civil charges against Monsanto were added to a 1978 lawsuit against Outboard Marine Corp. of Waukegan, Ill. The government says Monsanto continued selling polychlorinated biphenyl to OMC even when it knew the motor firm was discharging the pollutant into the water.

OMC has filed its own complaint against Monsanto.

European Chemical Firms Expect Profits To Fall Sharply in 1980 Due to Recession

7/24 By JONATHAN SPIVAK And JOHN M. GEDDES
Staff Reporters of THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

The rapid retrenchment in the West European chemical market will cut deeply into profits of major European producers this year.

The sales decline that started abruptly in March has already spurred price cutting by Continental European companies and plant curtailments in the United Kingdom, where chemical concerns are even more severely hit.

"With Europe's dropoff in industrial production in 1980, chemicals will almost certainly drop," declares Chris Burbridge, an investment analyst at Phillips & Drew, a London stockbroker.

Besides the drag of a general business slowdown, European chemical concerns are being hurt by substantial stockpiling last year in advance of expected price increases, inroads into the market by aggressive selling of lower-cost American imports, and the sales-inhibiting impact of strong currencies such as the British pound.

Hurting, too, are rising prices for natural gas and oil. The cost of such raw materials for Western European chemical concerns rose 10% in the first quarter of this year and 40% in the past 12 months.

The producers, moreover, are facing increasing competition from Eastern European chemical plants, many of which were brought into production in recent years with the aid of Western capital.

Most European chemical concerns, however, are broadly diversified, and some areas of their business, such as agricultural chemicals, drugs and inorganic chemicals, are holding up. "The chemical crunch won't be so overwhelming as in 1974-75," reasons one industry specialist, referring to the squeeze five years ago following the quadrupling of oil prices by members of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries.

Industry leaders expect the next 12 months to be the most difficult, with a pickup beginning in the second half of 1981 and further recovery in 1982. "The current recession, which is only now beginning in Europe, will last until mid-1981," predicts Jean Gandois, president of Rhone-Poulenc S.A., the French chemical concern.

In the U.K., the chemical-industry slide began in March, and results in April and May have been "disastrous," says one industry specialist. The British companies have been affected by plummeting industrial production, which is expected to be down 4% for the year, in contrast to a 1% to 2% increase in Continental Europe; the strong pound which prices British products out of some export markets, and higher prices for some raw materials than those paid by West German and French companies.

Imperial Chemical Industries Ltd., the biggest U.K. chemical company, is likely to end the year with pretax profit of less than the equivalent of \$1.19 billion, down more than 10% from last year, industry analysts forecast. ICI, itself an oil producer, will benefit from new North Sea Oil production, but the gains won't be enough to offset chemical-earnings declines. During the 1975 recession, ICI pretax profits fell 30%.

Other U.K. chemical concerns are also running into serious difficulties. Pretax profit could be down as much as 20% at Laporte Industries Ltd. and 5% to 10% at BOC International Ltd., industry specialists say.

"One thing is sure, 1980 will certainly be a worse year for the chemical industry than 1979," says Karl Wamsler, chairman of the German Chemical Industry Association. Chemical production in Germany began to lag in April and weakened further in May and June, he notes.

All the big three German chemical companies—Hoechst AG, Bayer AG and BASF AG—have been affected by the downturn, but are hesitant to forecast the effect on results.

Matthias Seefelder, chairman of BASF, says that the chemical industry's "economic prospects will be increasingly influenced by world-wide political insecurity, which will handicap world trade, and by recessionary tendencies in the U.S."

While sales for the German chemical concerns rose 20% in the first quarter, the rate of increase dropped to 12% for the first half and will further decline to 9% for the full year, Deutsche Bank AG predicts. And the bank notes that most of the full-year increase will be due to higher prices.

In Switzerland, a spokesman for F. Hoffmann-La Roche & Co. says: "Inflation is the main problem, as prices can't be raised enough to compensate for wage increases

7/24
Wall Street Journal

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GOVERNMENT REGULATIONS requ banks to tell customers more than they w to know. Northwestern National Bank Minneapolis sent customers a 4,500-w booklet entitled "New Electronic Fu Transfer Disclosure Notice." To test reac ship, 100 of the booklets contained an ad paragraph promising \$10 for the asking. one has yet requested the money.

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Compiled by Jane Rasmussen
Chemical Manufacturers Association

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