

CHEMICALS

INTEROFFICE / LAKE CHARLES

INDUSTRIAL

TO O. L. Cromeans DATE May 9, 1975
FROM Glenn D. Garber *Glenn D. Garber* SUBJECT Survey of Medical Problem People

In response to your request, I have checked with the following companies concerning the manner in which they handle medical problems among operators in PVC and VC operations.

Diamond Shamrock, Houston, Texas - I talked to Warren Riggs on Friday of last week to determine what Diamond is doing or has done with respect to operators who have exceeded the NIOSH medical standards in PVC and VC operations. He told me that they have not as yet experienced a problem in these operations but did have a similar problem in 1969 in their mercury cell operations. They reassigned the operator to day work, maintaining his base rate of pay until such time as he was able to return to the unit. He indicated that if future problems were experienced in other operations, they would handle the employee or employees in the same manner by reassigning the individuals to day work where they could best utilize them.

Of course, Diamond Shamrock is non-union and they operate much like du Pont does in that they give the employees every benefit possible to keep them from getting interested in a bargaining agency.

Goodrich Gulf, Orange, Texas - I talked to Obran Medley, Rusty's father, about this problem and he told me that they had not experienced any problems as yet at the Orange Plant but Goodrich plants in Calvert City and at Louisville, Kentucky had both experienced problems. The plant in Calvert City is a VC plant and the one in Louisville is a PVC unit where all the cancer scare originated a year and one-half ago. He suggested that I call Ken Pember at the Louisville Plant to get detailed information from him, and I did this. The first thing Ken told me was that he hoped we do not experience the problems that they have experienced in Louisville where they have had government representatives in their plant constantly for the last year and one-half. He said that when employees in the PVC plant are medically tested for the first time if the findings exceed the maximum nothing is done until a second test confirms the first test. When this happens the employees in the past have been removed from the area and kept at their normal basic rate, working in the labor gang, as janitors and any other work that needs to be done. An effort is then made to determine whether these individuals have job related medical problems or non-occupational problems. Liver scans, arteriograms, x-rays, juglar biopsies with needles are all part of the tests that these people undergo before the doctors make a decision on whether their problem is job-related or not. They have found that some of the people, approximately six or eight, have exceeded the maximum standards because of drinking too much and these people are assigned to other work until their blood levels reach an acceptable standard. The other employees whose problems seem to relate to their work have been placed on sick leave which permits them to be paid regular wages for 36 weeks and then \$95/week for 16 weeks.

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Pember told me that they had just signed an agreement with the union which will permit the company to handle these type of individuals differently than they have in the past. Goodrich has taken over a large warehouse in Louisville where they expect to use the job-related problem people in pallet building operations and will work them at whatever rate is appropriate for the type of work they are doing. Pember feels that this operation will reduce their present high cost of sick benefits in taking care of these people.

Ethyl Corporation, Baton Rouge, Louisiana - Rodney Guillotte with Ethyl told me that they have PVC and VC plants but have not yet had any difficult medical problems. He said that in past years Ethyl has experienced problems with people who have exceeded the lead maximums and have moved these people out of the area and assigned them to jobs wherever they were available until such period of time as their lead levels had dropped to where they could be reassigned to their regular job. Rates have always been maintained on these individuals and their seniority is kept whole. They have assigned these people to such places as stores and the central shop area. He said that he felt that employees in PVC and VC operations would be handled in much the same way. Recently two employees with liver disorders were kept out of the PVC area for a period of 16 weeks when their personal physicians recommended that they not be assigned to the unit for this period.

Continental VCM, Westlake, Louisiana - I talked to Joe Gross and he said that they had not had any problems up to this time but would be interested in knowing what we find out. They are apparently giving to their employees much the same type of medical tests that we are giving. He said that Certain-Teed had an engineer down here who could not pass one of these special tests and he was offered a transfer back to Pennsylvania but he understood that this man had quit and joined another company.

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cc: R. E. Hanna
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