

National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health
550 Main Street, Room 7033
Cincinnati, Ohio 45202

November 16, 1971

James E. Peavy, M.D., Commissioner of Health
Texas State Department of Health
1100 West 49th Street
Austin, Texas 78756

Dear Dr. Peavy:

A recent N.I.O.S.H. survey demonstrated an extremely serious and critical occupational health situation at the Pittsburgh Corning Corporation Amosite Asbestos Thermal Pipe Insulation Plant in Tyler, Texas.

N.I.O.S.H. industrial hygiene surveys in 1967 and 1970 yielded grossly excessive fiber concentrations compared to current and proposed standards, and those results were forwarded to the company for appropriate action. Following requests for evaluation, and assistance from the Texas State Health Department and the local membership of the Oil, Chemical, and Atomic Workers International Union, N.I.O.S.H. conducted a comprehensive industrial hygiene and medical survey during the week of October 26 to 29, 1971.

The survey pointed out major industrial hygiene deficiencies which included a grossly inadequate ventilation system and poor housekeeping practices. In August 1971, respirators were made mandatory in all areas concomitant with application for variance from the current asbestos standard; however, our survey personnel observed many employees with loose or unconnected straps. Also, there was no program for the fitting and maintenance of respirators. Again personal air samples yielded grossly excessive fiber concentrations in all production, finishing, and shipping areas.

N.I.O.S.H. medical questionnaires and examinations for rales and finger clubbing were conducted by our survey team on 63 employees in order to complement the X-rays and pulmonary function tests performed by

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Dr. James E. Peavey - 11/16/71

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Dr. George Hurst of the East Texas Chest Hospital in August 1971 at the request of the Pittsburgh Corning Corporation. One film was read as a pulmonary neoplasm by Dr. Hurst, and this diagnosis was confirmed following hospitalization. In addition, several films were read as possible pulmonary fibrosis. However, Dr. Lee Grant, Medical Consultant to the Pittsburgh Corning Corporation, has delayed release of these films to N.I.O.S.H. and its expert panel of radiologists pending his personal review of the films. Even without benefit of the X-rays, 7 of 18 workers with greater than ten years employment at the Tyler Plant meet at least three of four criteria for asbestosis. These criteria include: (1) forced vital capacity below 80% of predicted, (2) dyspnea, (3) finger clubbing, and (4) rales. Positive X-ray results could increase further the number of cases of asbestosis. Reduced pulmonary function was also observed in a few workers with less than five years employment.

Therefore, medical follow-up of current and past employees is indicated. Immediate corrective action is necessary to reduce asbestos exposure levels to conform to existing standards.

Sincerely yours,

William M. Johnson, M.D., Acting Deputy Director, Division of Field Studies and Clinical Investigations, National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, 1200 North 17th Street, North Platte, Nebraska 68901.

The survey pointed out the need for Bobby F. Craft, Ph.D., which included a general leadership and Acting Director, Division of Technical Services, in August 1971, responsible for the Division of Technical Services, and responsible for the Division of Technical Services, and responsible for the Division of Technical Services.

Encl: (Air Sampling Results: October, 1971) - several employees with lungs or uncontracted lungs. Also, there was a problem for the finding of Mr. Marcus M. Key, M.D., and Mr. Charles Van Horne, M.D., and Mr. J. B. Stokes.

Mr. George Pettigrew, Region VI, N.I.O.S.H.
Mr. John K. Barto, Region VI, O.S.H.A.
Mr. Joseph K. Wagoner, S.D.Hy.

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William M. Johnson, M.D.
Acting Deputy Director,
Division of Field Studies and
Clinical Investigations

Bobby F. Craft, Ph.D.
Acting Director,
Division of Technical Services

Encl. (Air Sampling Results: October, 1971)

cc: Marcus M. Key, M.D.
MR. Charles Van Horne
Mr. J. B. Stokes

Mr. George Pettigrew, Region VI, N.I.O.S.H.
Mr. John R. Barto, Region VI, O.S.H.A.
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