

HEALTH SERVICES AND MENTAL HEALTH ADMINISTRATIVE
National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health
550 Main Street, FOB, Rm. 8409, Cincinnati, Ohio
DATE:

TO : Director, DFSCI

January 12, 1972

FROM : Richard A. Lemen, Epidemiologist
Biometry Branch, DFSCI

SUBJECT: Trip Report - Tyler Asbestos Meeting



Travel Order : PHS 017281

Departed From : 1/5 Cincinnati, Ohio 10:00 A.M.
1/7 Tyler, Texas 2:00 P.M.

Arrived : 1/5 Tyler, Texas 8:00 P.M.
1/7 Cincinnati, Ohio 9:00 P.M.

Purpose : To meet with Dr. George Hurst, Director of the East Texas Chest Hospital and Dr. Lee Grant, Medical Director for Pittsburgh Corning to discuss the release of x-rays taken of employees at the Tyler, Texas thermal insulation asbestos plant in August 1971 and also to discuss results of the NIOSH medical survey of the plant in October 1971.

Accomplishments : (a) The meeting started at 9:00 A.M. in the conference room of the East Texas Chest Hospital with Dr. George Hurst, Dr. Lee Grant, Mr. Bill Farkos, Director, Personnel and Industrial Relations, Pittsburgh Corning, and Dr. Richard Spiegel, and myself from NIOSH in attendance.

The first portion of the meeting dealt with clarifying NIOSH criteria for asbestosis and East Texas Chest Hospital procedures for the medical evaluation of the surveyed employees.

We then began reviewing all of the 25 employees with five years' experience or more starting with those having the lowest DLCO, since Dr. Grant felt this

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to be the best indicator of a pneumoconiosis-like disease. Using the pulmonary function information obtained by the East Texas Chest Hospital and the rales, clubbing, and dyspnea data obtained by the NIOSH medical survey team, we placed seven of these individuals into the category of asbestosis by the NIOSH criteria. X-rays taken in May 1969 and August 1971 were also reviewed on each of these individuals, but no evaluation by the UICC code was done.

The remaining employees were then reviewed. In this group there were 25 present employees who had pulmonary function data available, 13 employees were hired after the survey by Dr. Hurst in August 1971 and, therefore, had only medical evaluation by the NIOSH team and no pulmonary function data, while 9 employees, no longer employed, had only pulmonary function data available. No new individuals were found that met the NIOSH criteria for asbestosis, however, several had indications of early pulmonary disease.

Dr. Hurst indicated during the meeting that the Texas State Health Department had told him not to release the x-rays to NIOSH. Dr. Grant stated it was agreeable with Pittsburgh Corning to release them to NIOSH. Dr. Hurst said approval was needed by him from his superiors at the State Department of Health. It was, therefore, agreed that Dr. Spiegel and Dr. Grant would leave the next day following our scheduled morning meeting for Austin, Texas to obtain this permission for release.

- (b) At the next meeting the following morning at 8:00 A.M. we were joined by Mr. Steven Wodka of the Oil, Chemical, and Atomic Workers International Union and H. L. Yandle, local president of the same union, which represents the workers at the Pittsburgh

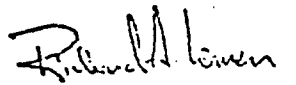
Corning Tyler, Texas plant. The purpose of this meeting was for Dr. Hurst and Dr. Grant to release their summary medical data to the Union, which they did. NIOSH summary medical data was also released at this time, stating that this was only preliminary data pending results of the NIOSH expert panel of radiologists on the x-rays. Mr. Wodka indicated that the Union would like for each man to receive results of his medical evaluation both from Dr. Hurst and Dr. Grant and from NIOSH. He indicated that each employee would file a workman's compensation claim at the termination of his employment, and that the information was necessary for this purpose.

- (c) After the meeting I was informed by Mr. Wodka and Mr. Yandle that other dumping areas used by Pittsburgh Corning for asbestos existed in the Tyler area, that were not previously noted by NIOSH. They also indicated the use of asbestos bags for the wrapping of trees at nurseries. I investigated the dump areas and found several uncovered asbestos dumps near the Oventown Sewer Works off of Int. 20 and old 155. One dump was located near the road (155) and within 100 yards of a private residence. The size of the dump was approximately 100 to 200 yards back of the first dump. There were weeds growing through the piles of asbestos so apparently it had been dumped several years ago.
- (d) I also went to the Eikner Nurseries of Tyler, Texas and found they had bought burlap bags used to transport raw amosite asbestos from Pittsburgh Corning in Tyler, Texas for use wrapping, bagging, and packing trees. Apparently they last received bags from the company in spring of 1970. Mr. Elbert Fenton of the nursery showed me a barn used to store the

bags and it looked as if 1000 to 2000 bags were still there. He indicated they didn't use the bags often, but while I was there a woman worker came in, picked up a bag, shook it for about 15 to 30 seconds to remove the dust, and thus created a large dust cloud in her breathing zone. She then went into a small room next to where the bags were stored and used the bag for a lap cover while she grafted plants together. I asked for one of the bags and brought it back for our lab to evaluate for asbestos content and amount of asbestos expelled while being shaken. Results of these tests will follow later.

I feel the use of these bags should be discontinued and that the bags should be disposed of by burying. In a recent report by Wagner, et. al.* they state that "... a small group of cases of mesothelioma occurred in women who worked in a bagcleaning factory. Detailed inquiry showed that some of the bags had been previously filled with asbestos." It was mentioned that other nurseries in the southwest United States also purchased the bags for similar use and I feel this should be followed up.

- (e) Results of Dr. Spiegel's meeting in Austin will be in his trip report.


Richard A. Lemen

* Wagner, J., Gilson, J., Berry, G., and Timbrell, V. (1971) Epidemiology of Asbestos Cancers, British Medical Bulletin Vol. 27, No. 1, p. 73.