



53rd ALL-OHIO SAFETY CONGRESS & EXHIBIT

April 12, 13, 14, 1983

PLAINTIFF'S
EXHIBIT
BRK-273

our brand of safety

April 15, 1983

John A. Wright
Safety Supervisor
Fisher Body Division
General Motors Corporation
P.O. Box 760
Elyria, Ohio 44035

Dear Mr. Wright:

On March 22 and 23, 1983, visits were made to Fisher Body to investigate an anonymous employee's complaints. Initially, our Columbus Central Office received a call in the late afternoon on March 15th. Although that conversation referred to chemical fumes, laborers, machines, guarding, and a supervisor (S. Grim), the caller did not identify any specific operation, chemical or exposure effects involved.

Through plant conversations on March 22nd it became evident that the given supervisor's work location dealt with the Foam Department (5). At that time, possible past plant experiences thought to be relative to this complaint were relayed as follows:

--When certain easterly wind conditions are prevalent, Foam Department air intake vents have, unpredictably, drawn in vapors exhausted by the somewhat close roof proximity of the Paint Department stacks. Management noted that oven seal repairs have been made, and paint exhaust stacks have been extended in an effort to control such a situation.

--There has been a noticeable odor from the MAK (methyl n-amylketone) ingredient in the hi-solids paints, even at the trace levels monitored by your lab. A substitute for this diluent had already been requested in your supplier's manufacturing of this plant's paint.

--The potential exists for the negative pressure kept in the Foam Department, to pull air from the paint work area, especially if adjoining doors/entrances are kept open.

Whether or not any of the aforementioned items had accounted for the complaint to be filed could not be determined at that point in time.

The Industrial Commission of Ohio • Division of Safety and Hygiene • 246 N. High St. • Columbus, Ohio 43215

Richard P. Celeste, Governor • W. Craig Zimpher, Industrial Commission Chairman • Steven A. Hatten, Vice Chairman • Leonard T. Lancaster, Member
Philip A. Workman, Safety and Hygiene Superintendent • Bob Riley, Assistant Superintendent • Lawrence J. Whalen, Manager of Special Programs and Conferences

Subsequently, at the completion of that date's (3-22-83) investigation, our Department received another call from the same individual. In short, due to the obvious generalities of the first complaint, the areas of this employee's concern were, apparently, not addressed. Therefore, the March 23rd visit necessitated for the purpose of investigating: (1) vapors from the Mold Release area, and (2) the potential for the "TDI gun to shoot TDI all over the place" when its left unattended.

Before proceeding, it should be emphasized that the second complaint, again, did not specify which production lines were involved or what adverse effects, if any, were being experienced. Additionally, your company and union have openly expressed a willingness to evaluate the problem if the individual complaining would provide personal identification.

In regard to the Mold Release area, per agreement with management, union, and this division, your lab took an environmental air sample for the hydrocarbon naphtha at an operator position of the Bucket Line's hand spray station. This location was chosen as there have been instances of workers experiencing a "halo" or blurred-eye effect at the site. One individual later noted past occurrences of nausea.

The naphtha sample was obtained with a MDA Model 808 Accuhaler sampling pump and an activated charcoal tube. A 69.08 ppm result was reported by your lab from the gas chromatograph analysis conducted at the end of the first shift. Pertinent naphtha standards are 100 ppm (ACGIH) and 500 ppm (OSHA).

Smoke tubes did illustrate that although the mold release ventilation does have a sufficient capture velocity, there are certain spraying positions where turbulence is evident. This would appear to be in support of a common hand spray complaint made to this investigator, of the release compound being "kicked" back at the worker. The continuous air sample will not document such intermittent fluctuations of naphtha exposure. Consideration should be given to modifying overhead make-up air units in order to help direct air flow away from the workers' breathing zone toward the exhaust ventilation. A basic ventilation illustration is attached. Additionally, the workers' use of the available chemical goggles will help to control the eye effect. In progressing to the unattended TDI gun concern, it appears that the major underlying factor of this statement relates to an economic cutback which had reduced the number of setup men for each foam pouring station down to one man about 8-10 months ago. This in itself is an administrative matter in which the division cannot be involved.

In retrospect, the current setup man's job responsibilities will, at times, require a trip to be made to the bulk storage area. In so doing the computerized pouring station is left unattended. Generally speaking, no system is 100% foolproof, therefore, the remote potential for malfunctioning, cannot be totally eliminated. Foam line procedures and design do not indicate that TDI can literally be sprayed as implied. An accidental spill or a "runaway" pour would

8

appear to be incidents which can occur regardless of whether or not the setup man was in attendance. From this standpoint, a basic working knowledge of potential exposure hazards, relevant signs and symptoms of exposure, appropriate emergency procedures, and proper conditions and precautions concerning the safe use and handling of TDI, is of the utmost importance for all current and prospective foam line workers. Continued reinforcement is needed in your training of these individuals. On verbal questioning, three out of four de-mold workers could not relay what the standard operating procedure required them to do in the event of observing a liquid upon the opening of a mold.

The cooperation extended throughout this investigation was greatly appreciated.

Respectfully,

Jane A. Tylka

Jane A. Tylka
Industrial Hygienist

JAT/rr

Enclosure: ACGIH, Industrial Ventilation, 15th edition, p. 2-3