



UNION CARBIDE CORPORATION  
CHEMICALS AND PLASTICS

February 16, 1979

TO ALL SOUTH CHARLESTON UNION CARBIDE EMPLOYEES

This letter is being sent to you in keeping with our policy to advise you of noteworthy activities at this plant. It is not intended to alarm you nor do we believe there is a cause for immediate, undue concern.

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) have begun an investigation at Union Carbide's Texas City Plant to determine whether there is an unusual incidence of brain tumors, and, if so, whether they have been the result of on-the-job exposures. Since it appears likely that this will receive national attention in the news media, we are sending you this letter to inform you of the situation.

To establish whether there is an unusual incidence of brain tumors at Texas City will require a full-scale epidemiological study, which is an attempt to correlate causes of death and employee work histories to see if certain exposures give rise to any unusual incidence of death from cancer or any other cause. Such a study will be undertaken by NIOSH. The preliminary examination of Texas City medical records, work histories, and death certificates of former employees does not provide any evidence at this time that any brain tumors have been the result of on-the-job exposure. Moreover, a review of the work histories of employees who reportedly died from brain tumors shows no common job assignment or chemical exposure.

However, OSHA appears to suggest that vinyl chloride is responsible. Union Carbide feels that there is not yet enough information to determine whether the brain tumors are related in any way to the workplace, much less to vinyl chloride.

Nevertheless, we have begun an investigation of our medical records and work histories here at the South Charleston Plant. As part of our overall occupational health program, an epidemiological study will also be conducted. This will be a massive undertaking, involving a population of upwards of 50,000 employees since the plant opened.

Finally, we do not believe that there is any need to establish new, special precautions. We will continue to operate the plant in full compliance with all Federal and State regulations, as well as our own health and safety standards which are more stringent than those imposed by government agencies.

We intend to keep you advised as the epidemiological study plans develop or of any other significant information.

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J.E. Beckman  
Plant Manager

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R. W. Holland, M.D.  
Plant Medical Director

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Houston Post - February 16, 1979

U.S. Checking to See if Workers' Deaths Linked to Substance

An unusually high number of workers at UCC Texas City plant died of a type of brain tumor that has been linked to cancer causing agent, Vinyl Chloride, federal health authorities confirmed Thursday.

The substance was once manufactured and is now processed at the large chemicals and plastics plant.

A top Labor Department official said scientists associate the chemical with a cancer tumor known as Glioblastoma multiform.

The Houston Post has learned that medical certificates from at least nine Texas City workers who died between 1962 and 1978 listed that type of tumor as cause of death. About 455 death certificates have been examined thus far by health authorities.

In addition federal authorities said a 10th plant employee, still living, has been diagnosed as "probably having same form of tumor."

Health records of current and former Texas City Plant workers - 8,000 to 10,000 - are being reconstructed for study by scientists working for OSHA and NIOSH.

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These records which company officials describe as "sketchy" and "difficult to piece together" go back to 1941.

The company feels this is not a crisis that poses any immediate exposure hazards for current employees" said Plant Manager, Damon Engle Thursday. "Practically all of the effected employees worked for substantial period of time from mid 40's to present in a period in which neither the government nor the company had any reason to suspect Vinyl Chloride"

The company said it is "not yet ready" to assume Vinyl Chloride is responsible for the deaths, as OSHA suggests.

We do think that if Vinyl Chloride <sup>should</sup> ultimately <sup>be</sup> implicated that OSHA and the industry should take credit for recognizing hazards at this stage. )

"Our plant has been in compliance and remains in compliance" with current chemical safety standards he said.

The joint OSHA - NIOSH investigation was prompted by a worker complaint said ~~De~~ulah Bingham, Assistant Secretary of Labor for OSHA in Washington

The complaint was received at a local OSHA office November 27 of last year and an investigation launched December 13, Bingham said. A team of three scientists from NIOSH and two from OSHA and OSHA area technical personnel made the preliminary study.

" The company has proved to be very cooperative thus far in our joint study of the situation" Bingham noted.

The total number of brain tumors found so far there "appears to be higher than expected" at a plant like that at Texas City, which currently employs about 2,000 workers, and represents "an unusually high incidence"of such deaths Bingham said.

"It is too early and there are too many chemicals in use at the plant to reach any definitive correlation Bingham said. The study would determine "the degree of risk workers may face" and the apparent "cause and causes of these tumors Bingham said.

The findings represent only preliminary data, a company spokesman noted. Study results will not be available for months.

"We have an indication that NIOSH wants to play a major role in the study" said Engle, noting the company's "own scientific staff" would also be made available.

UCC this month sent its Texas City workers letters detailing the initial findings he said.

We told them not to be alarmed, there is a great deal of work to be done Engle said.

*and Polyvinyl Chloride are*

Vinyl Chloride is manufactured by dozens of chemical plants around the nation including another UCC <sup>*and used*</sup> plant in West Virginia. Company officials said records in that plant are being examined for similar tumor patterns.

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