



THE SOCIETY OF THE PLASTICS INDUSTRY, INC.

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PLASTICS INDUSTRY LABELS OSHA
VINYL CHLORIDE STANDARDS UNREALISTIC

NEW YORK, Oct. 1 -- The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) permanent occupational health standard on vinyl chloride monomer announced today is unrealistic, probably will be impossible for most, if not all, of the industry to meet and appears to have been developed on some basis inconsistent with recorded facts, according to The Society of the Plastics Industry, Inc. (SPI).

The standard announced by OSHA calls for a limit of one part per million of vinyl chloride monomer as measured over an eight-hour working day, with a ceiling of 5 parts per million as measured over any 15 minute time period. The standard applies to fabricators of finished polyvinyl chloride products as well as to producers of vinyl chloride monomer and polyvinyl chloride resins, and is scheduled to go into effect January 1, 1975.

SPI President Ralph L. Harding said that "OSHA may believe that it has adopted a compromise position between organized labor on the one hand and industry on the other, but the result is a standard that does not take into account in a practical way the known medical and technological facts."

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Shortly after the OSHA announcement, SPI filed a petition for judicial review of the standard in the United States Court of Appeals for the Second District of New York. A similar suit was filed by Hooker Chemical Company of Stamford, Connecticut.

Vinyl chloride monomer (VCM), an industrial chemical used in the production of polyvinyl chloride (PVC), a widely used plastic resin, has been linked in recent months with a higher than normal incidence of angiosarcoma of the liver, a rare form of cancer, among previously highly exposed workers.

According to Mr. Harding, "the evidence presented at the OSHA public hearings in late June on VCM clearly showed that the employee deaths from angiosarcoma were a result of conditions existing decades ago, when exposure levels were many times greater than they are today. Furthermore, data developed by the Dow Chemical Company showed no excess mortality from any cause among long term workmen exposed to levels below 200 parts per million (ppm).

"OSHA apparently relied heavily on animal studies in setting its standard. This is quite incomprehensible, especially when more relevant human mortality data is available," Mr. Harding said.

At the OSHA public hearings the VCM-PVC Producers Committee of SPI recommended the establishment of a ceiling standard of 40 ppm and an eight hour time weighted average (TWA) exposure of 25 ppm for the PVC resin industry, and a ceiling of 25 ppm and a TWA of 10 ppm for the VCM producing industry, with additional phased reductions over the next few years. SPI also recommended that fabricators of finished PVC products be excluded from coverage under the standard altogether or that a separate, more relevant standard be considered for that part of the industry.

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"Our recommendations," Mr. Harding said, "were based on an honest evaluation of what the industry believed it could accomplish with known technology or with technology that could hopefully be developed within the next few years. Not one shred of evidence was presented at the public hearings or since which could have lead OSHA to the conclusion that a lower level was necessary or achievable throughout the industry at this time."

As to the net effect of the standards on the industry, he stated, "It would be inappropriate for us to comment on the overall impact until we have had time to study carefully the entire set of standards."