INTRODUCTION

by

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Let me say a few words about why we're having this particular Conference on Asbestos. If I were to rank those chemicals made and used by Du Pont in order of concern to me, I would not put asbestos at the top of the list. But, it has the spotlight on it at the present time for other reasons. There are enough workers throughout the U.S. who are exposed to asbestos and there are enough cases of occupational disease resulting from this exposure to have caused labor unions and the Federal Government to give this problem of asbestosis, and associated lung cancer, the first, and primary attention, under the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970. This attention occurred two ways. First of all, asbestos is the first chemical substance to have been made the subject of an emergency standard. This was on the motion of the labor unions that insisted that the current level of exposure as permitted under the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 12 fibers/ml was too high, and therefore, they put pressure on the Department of Labor to set a lower emergency standard. This was set at the current recommended level by the American Conference of Governmental Industrial Hygienists at 5 fibers/ml. This number five is not as low as the labor unions would have liked, so that pressure has continued on the Department of Labor to establish a permanent standard lower than 5 fibers/ml. The mechanism for getting at a permanent standard that affects health, is for the Department of Labor to request the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health to prepare a criteria document