

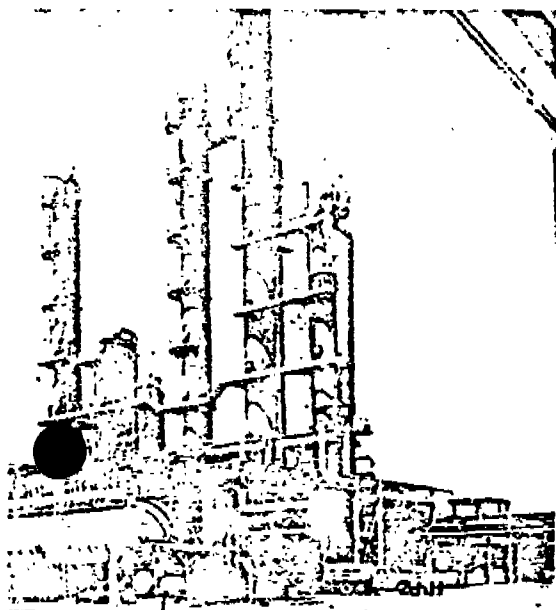
Strict standards out for vinyl chloride

Final regulations that sharply reduce worker exposure to vinyl chloride have been issued by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, four days before an emergency standard was due to run out. The new regulations apparently don't really please anybody. Labor has given them a lukewarm reception. And industry, which thinks they are far too strict, has immediately challenged them in the courts. Vinyl chloride has been linked to several liver cancer deaths among production workers.

confronted the assistant secretary, he has acted in a way that demonstrates his good faith."

Industry spokesmen take a much different view of OSHA's action. Todd C. Walker, president of Firestone Plastics, calls the standard "economically unrealistic, technically unfeasible, politically motivated, and medically ridiculous," adding that it "throws 2 million jobs down the drain." And Ralph I. Harding, president of the Society of the Plastics Industry, claims that "not one shred of evidence was presented at the public hearings or since that could have led OSHA to the conclusion that a lower level was necessary or achievable at this time." Firestone has filed a suit and joined another suit filed by SPI asking for prompt and complete review of the standard.

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Masks may be needed at plants like this

The new standard, covering vinyl chloride, polyvinyl chloride, and PVC fabricating facilities, will be implemented in steps. The present level of 50 p.p.m. will continue until Dec. 31. On Jan. 1, 1975, vinyl chloride in work-place air must be reduced to 1 p.p.m. averaged over an eight-hour period. Workers may be exposed to no more than 5 p.p.m. averaged over any period no longer than 15 minutes. If these levels can't be met, employees must be provided with respiratory equipment that can reduce the vinyl chloride concentration to 1 p.p.m.

The reliance on respirators "places the companies at an advantage," according to Louis S. Beliczky, director of hygiene for the United Rubber Workers International Union. He warns that it "may have the effect of minimizing efforts to initiate engineering controls and could lead to a 100% reliance on respirators." However, he says that "in light of all the pressure that has

NOTE: Picture shown is Allied Chemical's Baton Rouge North Plant.