

Mayor Earley Wants More Data Debate Polyvinyl Danger in Avon Lake

By CARRIE YAKLEY
Staff Writer

AVON LAKE — Mayor Harold Earley says that unless a new report concerning polyvinyl chloride and its correlation to birth defects contains more conclusive evidence than previous reports, he's not going to take it too seriously.

Mayor Earley was responding to a report released this week by Dr. Joseph Wagoner, director of field studies for the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health.

Dr. Wagoner testified before a Senate health committee during a two-day hearing at UCLA on the dangers and control of carcinogenic chemicals and said that birth defect rates are three times higher than normal in Avon Lake, Painesville and Ashtabula whether or not the babies' parents work at the polyvinyl chloride manufacturing plants located there. The hearing was held to look into the adequacy of state laws regulating the use of cancer-causing chemicals in industry.

Dr. Wagoner said that babies born in cities where polyvinyl chloride is manufactured are more likely to have birth defects affecting the central nervous system. Wives of workers, he said, are more likely to have miscarriages and the number of brain tumors developed in adults in the three communities is three times normal.

POLYVINYL CHLORIDE, a widely used plastic, has already been labeled a potent cause of liver cancer in workers where it is made.

Dr. Wagoner said the incidence of cancer in factory workers where the chemical is made is 49 percent higher than normal 10 years after exposure to the chemical and the proportion grows



WARNING SIGN located on the back of a tank truck leaving B.F. Goodrich Plant in Avon Lake. (Journal Photo by John Cole).

to 84 percent higher than normal after 15 years.

Dr. Peter F. Infante of the Ohio Department of Health in August, 1974, first noted that Avon Lake had twice the normal rate of birth defects, with 20 defects per 1,000 births compared with a state average of 10 per 1,000. In March, Mayor Earley warned against undue alarm over Dr. Infante's report.

"The men who made the reports

before ended up saying their evidence was inconclusive, that there was no definite link," Earley said.

He pointed out that the city planning commission and council have approved plans requested by B.F. Goodrich to "eliminate any exhaust fumes going back into the plant that have already gone out. The amount of contamination at Goodrich is below what the government allows as a tolerable amount. If it is below the tolerable amount I don't see how anyone could say they are polluters."

LOUIS ODENWELLER, chief environmentalist for the Lorain City Health Department with which Avon Lake contracts, said he's never really received any reports about the polyvinyl chloride and its effects.

"It's a hot issue and it's frightening," Odenweller said. "But before they give us anything it's going to have to be well documented."

Odenweller said his men have been to the Avon Lake plant but "no studies have been made, you're getting into a specialized field. The only way we could work properly is through the State Health Department — anything we would do would be related with what the state has."

A SPOKESMAN for B. F. Goodrich in Cleveland said he is attempting to obtain the full text of Dr. Wagoner's report and expects to have it in hand by Monday.

"Until then, I really can't comment on the report," the spokesman said. "All I can do is refer to an Aug. 4, 1975, article in Chemical and Engineering News — the official publication of the American Chemical Society — which

says birth defects cannot be correlated with vinyl chloride and states why."

He said the company has constructed new stripping facilities at its plants. The facilities are for removing and recovery of vinyl chloride from the resins.

"We are making strides and of course we don't have 100 percent but we are working on it," he said.

The Avon Lake plant has been manufacturing polyvinyl chloride from vinyl chloride since 1946. Last March, an employee of that plant, Charles Arthur of 950 Oakwood, Elyria, who had worked with vinyl chloride, was reported to have contracted liver cancer.

Robert Robinson, superintendent of Avon Lake Schools, said he has heard some discussion about the polyvinyl chloride but specific details have never been presented by anybody.

"We haven't pressed the panic button," Robinson said. "We won't move unless we get some more information. I think there is concern but the concern has been created by recent newspaper articles and television programs that came out recently. People for the most part need more information."

TOOLS STOLEN

VERMILION — Erie County Sheriff's deputies reported a number of items were stolen from a Greenhouse on USR 6, but no value was placed on the numerous hand tools, an outboard motor, and a mini-bike. Roger Ruetenik said someone broke into Ruetenik Gardens sometimes early yesterday morning by forcing open a padlock on one of the doors.

AT STEUK RED BARN

Harmon's

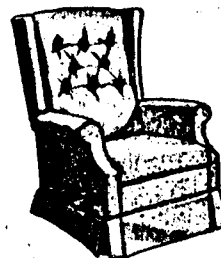
SUNDAY 1 to 5:30 P.M.

Saturday till 6 p.m.



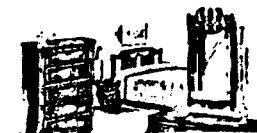
DINING ROOM
SALE

SUNDAY
1 to 5:30
SOFA SALE



SUNDAY
1 to 5:30
CHAIR SALE

SUNDAY
1 to 5:30



10026682