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Mr. S. C. Rubirn — Indian Orchard — 3/9/81

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GASKET MATERIALS

Your letter 2/26/81

The only data circulated to date in regards asbestos free packings/gaskets is the Engineering Specification that was released for grafoil stem packing. This, of course, is applicable to either iron or steel valves but the prime application, because of cost, is with steel valves. The purpose of the instruction was to put into practice a standard method for furnishing asbestos free packing when requested by a customer.

If you have a customer that wants asbestos free gaskets in a Limitorque operator, then this is a subject for negotiation between the I.O. Purchasing Department and Limitorque. If necessary, you can always change these prior to shipment to your customer.

I have not received any correspondence from D.Jahnke regarding gasket sheets containing asbestos. If there are corporate prohibitions on asbestos gaskets and packing in Crane plants, then all the valve plants are in trouble. I fully appreciate the need for avoiding a health hazard. Some of our customers perceive the workplace health regulations in a very strict way and are banning the use of asbestos in any form. So far this is a minority, but a slowly growing one.

The asbestos used in gaskets/packing is entrapped so that few, if any, fibers are released. The health hazard, as I understand it, comes about when asbestos is inhaled in relatively large amounts, regularly and over an extended time. This environment does not prevail in our valve plants for workers handling gaskets and packing.

Few substitutes are available and these cannot withstand the range of temperatures, corrosion, strength and impact of the asbestos materials. We may end up with a number of tailored substitutes to meet the range of application covered by asbestos alone. This could be a difficult inventory problem.

We have been doing literature evaluations and discussing substitute products with vendors. This is a screening process as a preamble to selection of materials for qualification testing of substitute packings and gaskets. Until we locate acceptable alternates, or until there is a prohibition on the use of asbestos gaskets and packings (either by OSHA/EPA or customer preferences), we are forced to continue specifying the proven asbestos material in our products.

WNMcL:fp

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