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"Asbestos on Marine Vessels"

MEMORANDUM

TO Mr. O. R. Menton	SUBJECT Asbestos on Marine Vessels	
FROM E. W. McNeil <i>EW</i>	DATE February 25, 1981	FILE NO. EXXON USA PRIVATE

The history of our efforts on working the asbestos problem on our vessels is as follows:

- On October 9, 1972, we issued a Circular Letter (attached) prohibiting further use of asbestos on our vessels. Copies of this to the Engineering and Planning Department were used to assure that new construction and contract maintenance would follow the same practice. We feel confident that this practice has been followed with one possible exception, in the mid 70's, when we discovered that Harrisburg Machine had possibly used a little asbestos on one maintenance job. It is sometimes difficult from visual inspection to discern if the insulation is asbestos.
- Our policy at that time and continues to be that we would not remove all asbestos aboard since there was no evidence that unless disturbed it presented any undue health risk. We have made some surveys including a recent survey on the EXXON PHILADELPHIA (attached) which confirms this. Surveys have been made both with the vessel at dock side in a still condition and at sea where vibration might be a significant factor.
- In 1972 when the original decision was made, Marine Department Port Engineer and repair personnel were confident that onboard maintenance by our people which might involve asbestos insulation would be practically nil. Based on this assumption we did not issue any formal procedures to our own people for handling asbestos.
- In about 1976 we issued a booklet to our fleet on "Asbestos Dust" (cover attached). This was among a series of books on safety and health which were distributed at that time.
- In early 1978 asbestos became more of an issue with the marine industry when attention was directed on shipyard workers. Attached is correspondence to Industrial Hygiene personnel with reference to prior correspondence to Dr. Lione concerning studies in the maritime industry on asbestos. About this time we became aware that our own personnel may be more involved, than earlier assumed, in periodic maintenance on our vessels which might involve short duration to asbestos exposure. In January 1979 we issued some information in the Port Safety Committee letter emphasizing the general precautions to be taken (attached). The earlier booklet on "Asbestos Dust" also had contained precautions. In addition, in September 1979 information from the Coast Guard Proceedings were forwarded to the vessels further instructing our people on general precautions to be taken (attached).
- We have been soliciting assistance from the Industrial Hygiene people over the past year to help us update our situation on asbestos. As you know about six months ago they provided Gerry Lautner, Industrial Hygienist, to work with Marine on overall health aspects on our vessels. Studies continued to confirm that the normal asbestos exposure was considerably below the levels set by standards for health. However these studies have indicated that our past efforts in communicating the proper methods for handling asbestos have not been totally successful.



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- Within the last few months as a result of the Coast Guard also issuing a set of guidelines we have been developing a Circular Letter of instructions to establish proper steps to be taken in handling asbestos. These should be completed in about two weeks.
- We have recently assisted our repair personnel in assuring that any asbestos removal contracted to small outside firms would be conducted in accordance with accepted practices. After one recent job was monitored we recommended cancelling any further work by one contractor since he appeared not to be capable of providing the necessary protective equipment and following the necessary procedures.
- In discussions with Dr. Lione following the above referenced correspondence to him in 1978, there was no indication that the Tulane study or other evidence at that time would lead to a review of historical medical records on marine personnel. In discussing this issue with Dr. Montgomery this morning, Gene Crawford determined that the cases at issue at Bayway have come from review of X-rays made during recent physical examinations. They have surveyed the other medical facilities who apparently have reviewed their more recent X-rays to see if they have any such cases. Any marine employee who may have had a physical recently would have had his record available in this review. We do not know how many, if any, marine people might be included in this review but the suspected cases of concern are apparently all refinery people. According to Dr. Montgomery these would be people whose past work records could be associated with more than routine exposure to asbestos. They have not made any extensive historical survey of X-rays to date. A decision is yet to be made on what their next steps will be in evaluating how extensive this problem may be. The key to finding this has been a change or an evolution in the ability to detect the evidence on the X-ray. They are at present reviewing all X-rays as physical examinations are performed.

We will be glad to discuss further if you desire.

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