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The Story of a Strange and Dangerous Dust

By NATE HALE

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An incurable and little known disease has been a deadly industrial hazard to workers in a multi-million-dollar California industry for at least 30 years.

The State government knows men have died from the disease and been disabled by it—but just how many it does not know.

This week, California will begin a full-scale investigation.

The disease is pneumoconiosis, closely related to silicosis, which is often accompanied by tuberculosis and has brought misery . . . and sometimes death . . . to hundreds of American workers.

It is caused by dust which men and women breathe in the industry's mining and processing plants.

The industry mines diatomaceous earth, a cream-colored mineral, the remains of microscopic animals which died millions of years ago. The workers call it "white gold."

In processed form, the earth, also called diatomite, is used in hundreds of products the world over—from filters for beer and sugar, to dynamite, cement, insulating brick, and glass wax.

And no one knows for sure whether industrial workers who use refined diatomaceous earth in making other products have contracted the disease or not.

State officials will investigate the Johns Manville plant at Lompoc, Santa Barbara county, site of perhaps the world's greatest and purest diatomite deposit—more than 80 per cent pure silica.

That plant employs 612 of the 1200 workers in the industry.

The State's investigation will open on the basis of this information, which officials say is incomplete:

Since 1945 at least four men have died from the disease.

Since 1943, the lungs of 15 men have been studied by scientists—after death or after the lungs were surgically removed. All 15 of the men showed signs of the disease.

Santa Barbara county health officers estimate that 26 persons have been diagnosed as having the disease since 1946. About eight of them had the added complication of tuberculosis.

The two diseases can often be confused, according to medical experts.

Lompoc, a town of some 7000 people, has accounted for 13.27 per cent of all the tuberculosis deaths in Santa Barbara county since 1930.

In 1951 alone, seven of the county's 20 tuberculosis deaths and 33 of its 85 new cases were Lompoc residents.

The story of pneumoconiosis from diatomaceous earth was first told by "Search," journal of the California Tuberculosis and Health Association.

Figures compiled by Search editors from data supplied by The Chronicle by Santa Barbara county's health department show this:

Since 1930 Lompoc's tuberculosis death rate (per 100,000 of population) has been higher than that of Santa Barbara county, the State of California or the United States in general.

After the Search story appeared A. B. Westmont, manager of the Johns-Manville plant, said:

"The incidence of tuberculosis among the men and women employed by Johns-Manville and throughout the Lompoc valley is low and compares very favorably with the rate in other areas of the State."

But the impact of pneumoconiosis from diatomite may not be limited to Lompoc or the other industrial and processing areas. For the turnover in the industry is high, ranging in one plant from 20 to 184 per cent a year.

So at this moment, nobody knows how many men have been exposed to this dust, left the industry—and turned up

Continued on Page 15, Col. 1

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COMPARATIVE RAINFALL

FORECAST and NEWS (See details on Page 17)

	Jan. 12	Month To Dt.	Season To Dt.	Last Yr. To Dt.	Aver. Seas.
San Francisco	1.15	10.11	8.11	11.71	17.00
S. F. Airport	.90	9.11	7.92	11.71	17.00
Berkeley	1.10	10.11	8.11	11.71	17.00
Alameda Airport	1.20	11.21	7.12	13.54	21.11
Livermore	1.15	10.15	6.61	12.13	21.11
Oakland Airport	1.10	10.15	6.61	12.13	21.11
Fremont	.90	7.72	4.63	9.38	14.34
Los Gatos	.90	7.72	4.63	9.38	14.34

Precipitation data to 4:30 p. m. Saturday (Pacific Standard Time) and forecasts to midnight Sunday

Vishinsky Offers New Atomic Plan

Continuous International Inspection Acceptable, Russ Declare for the First Time

By the Associated Press

PARIS, Jan. 12—Andrei Y. Vishinsky today proposed simultaneous prohibition of atomic weapons and establishment of strict atomic controls under which international agents would come and go on continuous inspections in any country including Russia, whenever necessary.

The Soviet Foreign Minister gave the United Nations Political Committee his new ideas on atomic control. He said the international control organ should have the right "to conduct inspections on a continuing basis, but it shall not be entitled to interfere in the domestic affairs of the states."

The Russians in the past have rejected the idea of permanent inspection teams, contending they would spy for the West. Vishinsky declared his plan was a "tremendous and momentous step forward" and called on the West to match the proposal.

American delegation spokesmen immediately maintained the value of Vishinsky's plan. They declared it contained mostly "old stuff." They said the provision that inspectors shall not interfere in the domestic affairs of the states would nullify the inspection machinery.

U. S. Ambassador Ernest A. Gross told the "political" committee the United States would consider the proposal. He suggested the plans be discussed in the U. N.'s new 12-nation disarmament commission.

Vishinsky told reporters later that he wants the U. N. Assembly to proclaim an unconditional ban on atomic bombs. He said, however, that such a ban would not take in

Britain's Only 4-Jet Bomber Crashes

BOURNEMOUTH, England, Jan. 12 (AP) — Britain's only four-engined jet bomber — recently taken off the secret list — crashed today in a test flight.

One crewman was killed but four others bailed out safely just before the big plane—known as the Vickers Valiant—exploded and dived in flames to the ground.

The Valiant — type of aircraft that would be used to carry the atom bomb in the event of war—has been ordered into mass production, but the wrecked plane was the only one completed.

GOP Group Endorses Warren

By EARL C. BEHRENS
Political Editor, The Chronicle

Governor Earl Warren's candidacy for the Republican presidential nomination was given a rousing approval by delegates to the State convention of the California Republican Assembly at the Hotel St. Francis yesterday afternoon.

Shortly before the vote endorsing Warren was taken, William F. Reichel of Oakland, former head of the assembly, delivered a message from U. S. Senator William F. Knowland.

Knowland phoned Reichel from Washington urging the assembly convention delegates to spike "a vicious rumor spread by a vicious group" concerning Warren's health.

Reichel informed the convention that Knowland telephoned the Governor at Honolulu about the health rumors.

"NO TRUTH" TO RUMORS

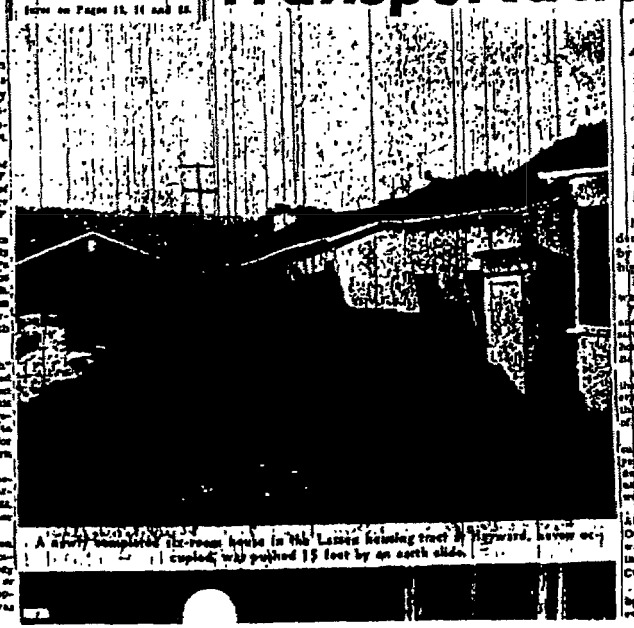
Warren said there was "no truth" to such rumors and authorized Knowland to state that Warren had "taken a month's rest at his doctor's advice" had now fully recovered and "will be prepared to take on a vigorous campaign for the Presidency" upon his return from Hawaii next week.

Reichel said Knowland had become disturbed by rumors apparently spread by Warren's opponents. Hence, he had phoned the Governor at Honolulu yesterday.

The resolution endorsing Warren was adopted with only a few negative votes from a small but vocal group that favored MacArthur or Taft as the GOP nominee. Adoption of the Warren endorsement was

Awash

Below are some of the scenes yesterday as the Bay Area battled the deluge from the skies. More stories and pictures on Pages 11, 14 and 15.



A newly completed six-room house in the Lamera housing tract in Hayward, below occupied, was pushed 15 feet by an earth slide.

Storm Floods Bay Towns; Transportation Is Tied Up

2000 Evacuated From Their Homes

Alviso and Knightsen Are Deep in Water

The Skies Pour It On The Bay Area

Nearly 8000 Bay Area residents were menaced yesterday by floods which surged head-high in low-lying areas.

More than 2000 fled their water-swept homes.

Flood waters from swollen creeks and heavy rains inundated thousands of acres and thousands of homes or basements in the East Bay, Peninsula and Marin.

More than 1000 people including the 700 living in Knightsen were evacuated from flooded homes in and around Brentwood and Concord areas of Contra Costa county.

Alviso, on the south bay shore, suffered the worst flood in its 102 years of history. Water four feet deep surged into nearly every home in almost all of its 700 residents were evacuated.

More than 3000 people in the Alameda area, 15 miles south of Oakland, were menaced by floodwaters which surged six feet high in places.

COAST GUARD HELPS

Two Coast Guard flat-bottomed boats were dispatched there to evacuate sick and elderly persons.

A punishing storm hit Northern California yesterday. Another will strike tonight and tomorrow.

Record amounts of rain and snow fell over the northern half of the State, and still more is forecast by the U. S. Weather Bureau.

A disturbance centered about 100 miles west of San Francisco dealt Central California steady blows yesterday. That storm is expected to give way late this afternoon to a new low pressure system moving rapidly south from the Gulf of Alaska.

The forecast showers this morning changing to moderate or heavy at times along the coast and over the lowlands, heavy snows and increasing gale winds through the passes in the Sierra Nevada.

The downpours yesterday struck hard at Bay Area families living in low areas. More than 3000 persons were evacuated from their homes in Contra Costa and Santa Clara counties and another 2000 in southern Alameda, mostly pre-

[illegible] the flood

Story of Strange, Dangerous Dust —Pneumoconiosis in California

How Many Died Is Not Known

Continued from Page 1

...ers who die...which dis... ...tuberculosis

STATE'S INFORMATION

How much has the State of California known about the problem and how much has it done?

Pneumoconiosis from diatoma... earth is almost exclusively an occupational disease, according to Dr. Herbert K. Abrams, director of the State Bureau of Adult Health. His bureau has been making dust checks since 1946 in the industry, on the basis of the State's maximum allowable content for free silica.

Yet the head of the State Industrial Safety Division, which enforces the laws protecting the State's workers, did not know the diatomaceous dust is toxic to human beings until a few months ago.

Because the State Bureau of Adult Health's work was done at the plant management's request, the reports were labeled confidential and not sent to the Industrial Safety Division officials, both departments say.

THE REAL STORY

The real story of the State of California vs. Diatomaceous Earth Dust began in 1930.

At the request of the tuberculosis association, the State Budget workers in Lompoc and the city was published in 1933.

One hundred eighty of about 450 workers in the plant volunteered for the survey.

Of these 16.5 per cent had pneumoconiosis.

The study was made by Dr. Robert T. Legge, founder of the University of California's Cancer Memorial Hospital and Dr. Esther Pohlenz, of San Francisco's pioneer woman researcher in lung disease.

RECOMMENDATIONS

They included these recommendations in their report:

1—No employment of persons having bronchitis, asthma, tuberculosis or cardiac disease for both protection of the company and labor.

2—X-ray chest plate every three months.

3—Every effort should be made to keep the dispersion of dust in the air to a minimum.

4—Workers' families should be examined once a year.

5—The company's hospital should be in the charge of a well trained physician.

6—"Suitable machinery and transportation methods should be developed in order to prevent dust dissemination."

NO ENFORCEMENT

Since the 1933 report State officials say they can find no evidence to show that California has been able successfully to enforce the full provisions of the dust control regulations in its statute books.

The Division of Industrial Safety has records showing the Lompoc plant was investigated in 1935. The investigation was terminated since it is alleged that plant officials said they had never had any cases of disability they knew about. Plant officials say they can find no records of the matter.

ADMISSION DENIED

In 1940 Dr. J. P. Russell, then head of Adult Health, was denied admission to the Lompoc plant on grounds permission from the firm's New York headquarters was required. Adult Health has no police or enforcement power. Plant officials say a check of their files shows no reference to the matter.

In 1941 the State Division of Industrial Safety had no evidence the dust was toxic nor had any compensation claims been filed, officials say.

There in 1946 the Bureau of Adult Health made dust counts at the plant management's request and trained company men to make them at Lompoc and at the Celite Division of Great Lakes Carbon Corp. plant at Wallenta in Los Angeles county.

DELAY IN COUNTS

Adult Health has made dust counts from time to time since.

According to bureau engineers the dust counts showed that:

In 1946 seven of the plants 30 operations all or counts were made showed more than double the State's maximum allowable dust content per cubic foot of air.

The dustiest operations were packing, car loading, bagging, batching to the kiln's press, crushing.

In 1948 an order was issued to Johns Manville to install ventilation in the bagging operations.

DUST CONTROL

By 1949 State officials say the firm had made tremendous progress in dust control—an opposite and difficult processing for which [illegible] telephone or telegraph." Violation of the law is a misdemeanor.

The Director of the States Division of Labor Statistics issued this statement to The Chronicle:

"The statistics of the Division of Labor Statistics and Research indicate that no cases of pneumoconiosis due to diatomaceous earth were reported through October 1951, since 1946—as far back as our check of files has gone. The division has records of three cases which came before the Industrial Accident Commission, where this condition was alleged, but no final determinations were made since the cases were closed by compromise and release."

COMMISSION'S FILES

The Industrial Accident Commission files go by case number and name—not by type of accident or illness. So the total number of cases that have been before it is currently unavailable. Some reform in the filing system is and has been under way, officials said.

The States Bureau of Adult Health can find two doctors' reports of lung ailments of the disease—both received within the past year.

The first concerned a man who left III in 1944. The report was filed December 6 1951.

Since April Adult Health has examined records of 13 cases which came before the Industrial Accident Commission.

ROUTINE RECORDS

That appears to be the sum of what State officials seem to know about the matter from the routine records that find their way into the vast and sometimes disordered archives of California's scandalized bureaucracy.

Since the March article the State has taken this action:

1—A. C. Blackman head of the Division of Industrial Safety, has ordered an investigation of the Johns-Manville plant at Lompoc. The company will be asked to control the dust to bring it within the State's law.

2—Adult Health is planning a complete survey including medical and X-ray examinations and engineering and technical studies of the mining and processing areas in California. It is also considering a study of the product's industrial uses and the possible health hazards that might be involved.

INDUSTRY'S ACTION

What has industry itself done about the problem?

For many years it has tried to control dust. It has provided how-

Lompoc's Share in County TB Rate

These figures compiled by the editors of Search magazine from data supplied The Chronicle by Santa Barbara county health officials, show how Lompoc compares with the county's total population in deaths due to tuberculosis.

	Lompoc—population at latest available date	Lompoc—percentage of tuberculosis deaths to all Santa Barbara county deaths	Lompoc—tuberculosis deaths per 100,000 population
1930	4,236	12.16	
1940	4,719	15.11	
1945	7,117	13.50	
1950	5,612	8.33	

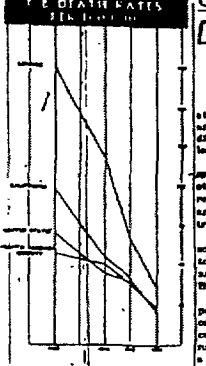
Control Is A Costly Problem

"It is unfortunate that an article of this nature should be published without an attempt being made to get all of the facts. . . Actually the incidence of tuberculosis among the men and women employed by Johns-Manville and throughout the Lompoc valley is low and compares very favorably with the rate in other areas of the State. The company appreciates the importance of health among its employees and for more than 25 years has had its own clinic at the plant with a prominent doctor in attendance to take care of the industrial accidents and to consult with employees about their individual health problems. As part of this program every employee is given an annual physical examination, including a chest X-ray. A large percentage of our employees has been with us for many years and there are 21 who have been working together for more than a quarter of a century."

London Buses to Roll to San Francisco

Three of London's red double-decker buses will be re-routed through the United States for an 8000-mile "Coree to Britain" promotion tour in March. They will reach San Francisco in late April or May. Organized by the British Travel and Holidays Assn., the tour will begin in New York and last for 105 days, embracing many major cities. Sacramento will be included on the return jaunt.

Rides will be free.



TB in Lompoc

This chart shows the number of residents from Lompoc, Santa Barbara county, who have died of tuberculosis. The Lompoc tuberculosis death rate per 100,000 of the population, though it has dropped sharply in recent years, is still above the rate for Santa Barbara county, for California and for the United States. The specific figures, supplied The Chronicle by Santa Barbara county health officials and interpreted statistically by the editors of Search are as follows:

	C. S.	Calif.	Santa Barbara county	Lom
1940	45.3	46.9	46.1	151.9
1945	40.8	40.9	39.1	110.0
1949	33.1	32.0	30.1	82.0
1950	32.7	31.7	30.1	58.3

Navy Plane Crashes

Thirty-one passengers aboard a Navy transport escaped uninjured yesterday when the plane nose wheel collapsed upon landing at Travis Air Force Base after a flight from Hawaii. Only the plane's propellers and radio antenna were damaged.

CCCCAAA SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE SUNDAY, JAN. 13, 1952 PAGE 15

Doctors Dispute About the Disease
What Is Pneumoconiosis?

What is pneumoconiosis from diatomite, the disease which has killed and disabled men working in the diatomaceous earth industry since at least 1930?

Doctors argue semantic distinctions, with scientific terms often used each other names. For the subject is relatively new, relatively unknown, and, above all things, highly controversial.

Yet certain basic facts are fundamentally held absolutely accurate by industry doctors, by physicians and the State Department of Health.

The disease is caused by the peculiar dust of diatomaceous earth or diatomite, which is almost 90 per cent pure silica. The earth is so ...ended because it contains quantity of ... a deposit of the microscopic skeletons of diatoms—tiny creatures that live in fresh and salt water, a form of algae—which died millions of years ago.

In the workers' lungs, these dust particles, gradually cause many deaths and deform the delicate tissues of the breathing apparatus, just as in ordinary silicosis.

Men may live for years with some scarring of the lungs and may never suffer ill effects. In fact many people inhaling city dust have mild forms of a similar lung condition, doctors say.

But the dust from diatomaceous earth can do more.

SCAR TISSUE

Disability it may cause ...tissue to spread over the lungs. And in some cases, where the lung becomes not one elastic breathing machine but a disordered mass of scar tissue, the ...person being may suffocate and die.

In silicosis, before the advanced stage is reached an intermediate or nodular stage is often found.

In pneumoconiosis from diatomaceous earth, doctors say this happens seldom if ever.

So, for example, a man who showed only mild formations of scar tissue ...

33.6 Per Cent of Workers Show Changes in Lungs

The present pneumoconiosis problem in the State's biggest single diatomite plant, at Lompoc, is illustrated by the following figures published by Dr. W. W. Anderson, consultant to the Johns Manville Co.

Of 922 people employed since 1942 who worked in the plant for at least a year, 308 or 33.3 per cent had X-rays showing mild pathological changes. 31, or 3 per cent, showed more serious pathological changes, one had tuberculosis in addition to the mild changes, and 613 employees, or 66.4 per cent, had negative X-rays.

Dr. Anderson emphasized however, that X-rays are not a complete test of lung condition.

...in the lung, could be a relatively short period of time develop massive scar tissue and death of lung tissue (necrosis), which could prove fatal.

Doctors say the disease takes two forms. One of these is relatively mild and may cause few effects. They believe that this form of the disease may come from the crude earth dust before it undergoes special types of processing.

The second type of the disease is more severe. It may produce massive formations of scar tissue in the lungs. It may cause disability and indeed, death. But there have been cases of men who had this type of disease and yet had few of the unpleasant symptoms such as short ...ness of breath, pallor, loss of weight and other symptoms often associated with severe lung ailments.

How often the mild form may develop into the severe form is not known though doctors believe it happens relatively seldom.

Lung changes have occurred in ...trately doctors say after one to three years exposure to diatomaceous earth—generally a shorter period of time than in ordinary silicosis.

CONTROL MEASURES

But recent dust control measures taken by the industry have very considerably lengthened this period, doctors believe.

Little medical literature on the disease is available in this country although much has been published in Europe.

Doctors associated with the industry say they have given many talks at medical meetings before the American Medical Assn., as well as before local health groups in Santa Barbara and Los Angeles counties.

These doctors report that it was not until 1942 that competent medical advice indicated the dust definitely could cause disability or death.

In 1945 Dr. Leroy U. Gardner, head of the Saranac Laboratories made a general survey of the pneumoconiosis problem at the request of Drs. Reginald H. Smart of Los Angeles and W. W. Anderson of Lompoc two pioneers in the study of the disease.

After the survey a more intensive program of dust control was started and extensive research began at Saranac by the industry. Recently an additional research program on the application of aluminum powder to silicosis to the diatomaceous earth industry was initiated.

Model Railroads

The Alameda Model Railroaders, Inc., will hold its monthly public exhibit of scale model equipment at 7:30 p. m. Friday in club headquarters, 2065½ Central avenue, Alameda.

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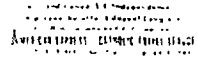
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