

Public Health Service, Bethesda

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January 31, 1945

Bureau of Medicine and Surgery
United States Navy Department
Washington, D. C.

Attention: Captain Thomas J. Carter, M.C.

Gentlemen:

2070325

Confirming our telephone conversation of the 30th, I enclose copy of report by Drs. Fleischer and Dreesen on the occurrence of asbestosis at Bath Iron Works, December 19, 1944, a series of dust counts by E. Ward Thompson of the insurance carrier, American Mutual of Boston and petrographic analyses of the dust by Dr. C. R. Williams, my own colleague at Harvard.

This evidence is enough to indicate a fairly serious dust risk at Bath and to make it very probable that the same sort of thing will be found in other plants and yards where the same type of pipe covering materials are used.

I met with the manufacturers of the materials used at Bath and they stated they would be glad to get out a brief statement of precautions which should be taken in the light of their own experience and that they would inform their competitors that I had asked them to do so. I understand that neither Navy nor Maritime wants any change in the specifications as the performance with the present materials is entirely satisfactory. From a health standpoint we do not believe any specification changes are needed.

I suggested to Admiral Mills that it would be very desirable for Navy to examine men handling the preparation of pipe coverings and their installation in at least two Navy Yards and two Navy contract yards as this is much more a Navy than a Maritime problem because the materials are used especially on Navy vessels with high pressure steam power plants. Admiral Mills agreed that such studies would be wise before Navy or Maritime accepted this asbestosis risk as being significant in our general ship construction program.

Therefore, could you not have such surveys made at Boston and New York Navy Yards? We could do two contract yards, preferably Bethlehem's Quincy Yard and either New York Shipbuilding or Federal.

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EXHIBIT

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All four yards would be close together and we know that the two we might do would cooperate. I suggest we take dust counts and have Dr. Williams make the same sort of petrographic analyses unless your Bureau can do them. These petrographic studies would be the only items of expense for which neither your Bureau nor our office is prepared. Williams' charges would probably not exceed \$150.00. If we had them done by an outside petrographer it would be at a rate of about \$25.00 per sample.

Please let me have your thoughts on this matter and kindly send an extra copy to Lt. Commander W. E. Fleischer, Assistant Chief Health Consultant, United States Maritime Commission, Jefferson Building, 1015 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia 7, Pennsylvania.

Sincerely yours,

Philip Drinker

Philip Drinker
Chief Health Consultant
Division of Shipyard Labor Relations

Enclosure

PDrinker/drh

cc: Admiral Mills
Dr. Fleischer
Mr. Phillips G. Pearson
Mr. Daniel S. Ring
Div. Shipyard Labor Relations

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