

has elapsed since both of these Committees have been appointed and public announcement has been made. Since the Act, in Section 6 (b) (1), provides a period which is not to extend longer than 270 days, it is our opinion that you are now in violation of the Act by the failure of the two Committees to make their recommendations to you in this time frame. We reject any attempt to explain that the time begins to elapse at the initial meeting or first working meeting, even if this Section of the Act did not make such a stipulation, we would still reject it. More than 270 days have elapsed to date from the date of the first working meeting of both Committees.

We would like your response as to when you expect these standards promulgated. Further delay can only expose thousands of workers to noise and heat stress hazards against which standards such as these should be promulgated to protect them.

Sincerely yours,

/s/George H. R. Taylor
Executive Secretary
AFL-CIO Standing Committee on
Occupational Safety and Health

Health Hazards

AFL-CIO CALLS ON BRENNAN TO CREATE ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR LEAD EXPOSURE

The Industrial Union Department, AFL-CIO, requested the Department of Labor to appoint and convene an advisory committee on the occupational exposure to inorganic lead in a message to Peter J. Brennan, Secretary of Labor, on February 6.

The request was issued on behalf of the IUD council on lead hazards. "We feel strongly that this step in the promulgation of a standard is essential in view of the shortcomings of the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health recommendations," the letter stated.

The NIOSH criteria document, issued in January 1973 (Current Report, January 18, 1973, p. 924), recommended a standard limiting occupational exposure to lead at 0.15 milligrams per cubic meter of air as a time-weighted average for an eight-hour workday. IUD claimed in the message that creation of an advisory committee "will permit full examination of information and views not adequately represented in the NIOSH criteria document."

Health Hazards

POLYVINYL CHLORIDE RESEARCH IS TOP PRIORITY WITH NIOSH NOW, KEY CLAIMS

CLEVELAND, Ohio — (By an OSHR staff correspondent) — Polyvinyl chloride research is a top priority of the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, NIOSH Director Dr. Marcus Key said February 12.

Key and other NIOSH experts addressed a briefing session on vinyl chloride for labor and management representatives. The session was scheduled following the

announcement of four cases of angiosarcoma at the B.F. Goodrich plant in Louisville, Ky. (Current Report, January 31, p. 1099).

NIOSH has taken action from the beginning to protect workers, Key said, although the proposed course of action to deal with the vinyl chloride hazard is not yet in final form. All parties concerned including B.F. Goodrich Company, the Manufacturing Chemists Association, and labor unions have responded quickly to the crisis, he added.

NIOSH Action

Key said that the emphasis on polyvinyl chloride research which now has the highest NIOSH priority will have an effect on other NIOSH projects. Hopefully, Key said, no other projects will have to be dropped.

Despite budget cuts for research activities, NIOSH will be allotted 40 more positions in fiscal 1975. Still NIOSH needs additional resources and must contract for some of its surveys, Key said. The average GS level of NIOSH employees is now 7.82.

NIOSH is not the only organization working on the polyvinyl chloride problem, Key stated. Other government organizations, companies, and unions are participating. NIOSH was only alerted to this problem three weeks ago, Key said, adding that NIOSH does not have all of the answers, but it will attempt to handle the problem in a professional manner.

Key said he was hopeful the angiosarcoma problem would remain a small occupational outbreak. He said he hoped the other plants to be investigated would have more open work processes than the Louisville plant, and that workers consequently would have less exposure.

Vernon Rose, assistant director, NIOSH, said the United States produces 25 percent of the polyvinyl chloride in the world. There are 23 plants and 5,000 workers employed directly in the polymerization process. Tens of thousands of workers are involved in subsidiary operations involving use of the product, he said.

The latent period for angiosarcoma involves decades, Rose said. Consequently NIOSH decided it is necessary to compare present work practices with those of the past. A list of some 50 chemicals that have been used over the years was identified and is being checked by NIOSH.

Louisville Plant Operations

The first step of the polymerization process at the Louisville plant involves the unloading of vinyl chloride as a liquid under pressure, Rose said. Vinyl chloride is a colorless gas with an odor threshold of 250 ppm, half of the OSHA maximum exposure standard of 500 ppm. Workers involved in this transfer operation reported smelling the odor many times.

Vinyl chloride is then pumped under pressure to a reactor where other chemicals are added, Rose said. The slurry then flows into a blow-down tank where it is subjected to high heat. Up to that point the substance is in a closed system.

After the substance leaves the blow-down tank, it goes to a blend tank that is covered but not really closed, Rose said. The substance then goes into dryers and is packaged.

Employees must enter and clean the reactor tanks,

Rose said. Because of obvious ill effects from exposure, such as a malady of the fingers, a steam cleaning system was developed. Now the employees only enter after each third batch to scrape the residue off. After each sixth batch employees enter from a more thorough cleaning.

There was a natural background level of vinyl chloride in the plant, Rose said. This was probably the result of various leaks in the system.

In the case of the two OSHA personnel present during the investigation of the Louisville plant, Rose stated that they were there on a fact-finding mission from the national OSHA office, and consequently were not concerned with issuing citations to the Goodrich plant.

NIOSH Recommendations

NIOSH made several recommendations for work practices to the B. F. Goodrich Company and the MCA, Rose stated. The recommendations covered the following areas:

(1) Housekeeping - moderate amounts of resin were found in the plant and NIOSH recommended that they be cleaned up. NIOSH further recommended that the resin be stored in closed containers and that eating facilities for the workers be separated from the work area.

(2) Protective clothing - NIOSH recommended protective clothing, including coveralls, for all employees, and that employees working in the tanks be provided with impervious suits.

(3) Showers - NIOSH recommended that all workers in the polymerization process be required to take showers after leaving work.

(4) Monitoring - NIOSH recommended that monitoring be carried out of the work environment to determine where leaks are occurring. NIOSH further recommended that eight-hour breathing zone samples be made for all employees.

(5) Respiratory protection - NIOSH recommended that all workers in transfer operations be provided with self-contained breathing apparatus and that employees in the tanks be supplied with air-supplied respirators.

Plant Fatalities

Dr. Henry Falk, Center for Disease Control, said he had examined all four cases of angiosarcoma reported at the plant. One of the men had been diagnosed as a victim of cirrhosis of the liver, he said. An autopsy revealed the existence of angiosarcoma.

All four of the victims had non-alcoholic cirrhosis of the liver in addition to the angiosarcoma, Falk said. In addition, he stated, they had no prior history of hepatitis or any other experience that could account for the disease.

NIOSH will be looking for the entire spectrum of diseases that may result from polyvinyl chloride exposure and will conduct studies of records of former workers in polyvinyl plants, he said.

Other Comment

Dr. J. William Lloyd, NIOSH, said that angiosarcoma is an extremely rare disease with a reported 20 to 30 annual deaths in the United States. The National Cancer Institute reports that only 16 of 623 known malignant cancers are classified as angiosarcoma.

Dr. William S. Lainhart, Center for Disease Control,

said the first priority of the investigation will be the study of vinyl chloride in the polyvinyl chloride process to determine the levels of worker exposure and its effects. In addition to that, NIOSH will need to obtain data on the uses of polyvinyl chloride and products that contain polyvinyl chloride.

Dr. Joseph K. Wagoner, NIOSH, said that NIOSH will conduct studies in plants that have had polyvinyl chloride operations for 15 years or more. The study of workers, however, will include workers with varying amounts of time of exposure. NIOSH is now finding the initial study group. NIOSH initiated a telephone survey of polyvinyl chloride plant facilities. The initial survey seems to indicate that most of the polyvinyl chloride facilities are clustered in Ohio, Kentucky, and Pennsylvania.

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Dr. Edward Fairchild, NIOSH, said he would initiate a study of the available literature regarding the toxicological effects of exposure to polyvinyl chloride. One toxicological report based on animal studies will be reported during the Labor Department hearing on February 15.

Health Hazards

MANUFACTURERS CHEMISTS ASSOCIATION STOPS ISSUANCE OF VINYL CHLORIDE SHEET

The Manufacturing Chemists Association announced it has stopped circulation of a chemical safety data sheet on vinyl chloride operations because of four fatalities from liver cancer among workers exposed to the substance at the B. F. Goodrich Company.

The action, taken on MCA Chemical Data Sheet SD-56 (1972), resulted from a report by the company that one of its plants had experienced four fatal cases of angiosarcoma, a rare cancer of the liver (Current Report, January 31, p. 1099). The 1972 sheet called attention to reports that long-term, massive exposure of rats to vinyl chloride vapors had produced malignant tumors of a kind not found in man.

In the 1972 revision of the data sheet, MCA called attention to the reports but added that carcinogenicity to humans had not been observed. The report from Goodrich questions the validity of this statement, MCA stated.

A new vinyl chloride data sheet will be issued by MCA when the carcinogenicity of vinyl chloride to humans has been resolved.

State Plans

NACOSH SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT URGES FEDERAL ENFORCEMENT UNTIL EVALUATIONS

Federal enforcement in states with approved plans should continue until initial evaluations have been conducted, the state plans subcommittee of the National Advisory Committee on Occupational Safety and Health recommended in a report submitted to NACOSH on February 12.