

3/19/79

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MAR 20 1979

FROM: Glynn Young

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FEB 17 1979

Manufacturing flaw may have caused Sturgeon dioxin

By Jon Frank
Missourian staff writer

The deadly chemical "dioxin" discovered last week in the carbonic acid spilled in Sturgeon Jan. 10 is not usually found in such acid and may have been produced by a flaw in the manufacturing process used by the Monsanto Chemical Co., a Monsanto spokesman said Friday.

The dioxin was discovered by Monsanto after the U.S. Environmental

Protection Agency requested testable preparations be made from a reserve sample held by the chemical manufacturer for quality control.

"We have checked samples of orthochlorophenol (the acid) before, and we've never found any evidence of dioxins present," said Bob Isham, a public relations official for Monsanto.

"We've got some people looking into it and they are checking to see if something in the process can be

corrected."

Isham said the chemical manufacture is complicated and it may take a while for the firm to find out how the impurities were produced in the material that was spilled in Sturgeon.

The federal government did not know the reserve sample existed until a panel of medical experts suggested calling the manufacturer to find more of the substance for tests.

Harry Gilmer, the on-site EPA of-

ficial, said Monsanto made its own decision to test the sample for dioxin. The firm's action was not because of a request by the EPA, Gilmer said.

Gilmer said EPA requested on Feb. 9 that Monsanto prepare two samples from the control sample and send them to EPA laboratories for testing for dioxin. That evening, Monsanto called and said it had tested the substance and discovered dioxin, but said they were not toxic, Gilmer said.

It was not until the samples from

Sturgeon were taken to the University of Illinois for testing on a sensitive piece of equipment that the toxic 2,3,7,8 form of dioxin was discovered.

Gilmer said, however, that the exact nature of the dioxin is still not known.

"The 2,3,7,8 is suspected but we do not have positive proof," he said. "My chemist says that it isn't present and I have no reason to doubt his opinion."

How the dioxin, whatever its type, got into the orthochlorophenol remains a

mystery. But Isham said, although Monsanto will attempt to discover its origin, "it is nothing that concerns us."

"We've been making the product for 30 or 40 years and we've never experienced any problems before," he said. "The levels of the dioxin are so low that they are not a problem."

The EPA will continue to monitor air in Sturgeon and take blood samples of those who are showing any physical reaction in cleaning up the spill.

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JUN 1 1979 *B.H.*

Sturgeon Still Being Tested

4377
From Columbia Missourian

The Environmental Protection Agency office in Kansas City, Mo., and O-H Materials Co. are still testing for chemical contamination in Sturgeon, four months after the Jan. 11 train derailment that spilled potentially dangerous chemicals.

Harry Gilmer, an EPA engineer, said the ground near the spill site is "clean and okay," and that Saling Creek is also safe for humans and aquatic life.

Meanwhile, O-H Materials Co. — a cleanup firm hired by Norfolk and Western Railway owners of the railroad car carrying the chemical — is using a carbon filtration process to clean up ponds and surface runoff water. EPA is using a special well to monitor ground water near the site to determine how far the contaminated water has moved

from the original site.

The soil surrounding the site, contaminated by 20,000 gallons (75,708 liters) of orthochlorophenol, a type of carboic acid, has been dug up, and any dangerous contaminants, such as dioxin, have been removed, Gilmer said.

Saling Creek on the west side of Sturgeon is also clean, Gilmer said. Safe levels of contamination are 100 or fewer parts of the chemical to one billion parts of water. The concentration in Saling Creek is now less than one part of chemical to one billion parts of water.

Gilmer said, "If there is contamination, it is below detection limits."

"No action was taken to clean up Saling Creek, because the microscopic life — or bacteria — destroyed any contamination. It was a natural cleaning process," Gilmer said.

O-H Materials Co. has been using carbon-filtration to accelerate the dissolution of chemicals in ponds and surface runoff water.

In this process, fresh water is forced into the soil to dissolve the chemicals. The water spreads out and floods to the surface. It is then tested for its concentration level, filtered through the carbon-filtration units, cleaned and recycled through the system again.

When O-H Materials Co. finds the orthochlorophenol contamination level is below 100 parts of chemical to one billion parts of water — which is the safety level — EPA will test the water. Gilmer said, "The water cannot be discharged until it is found to be acceptable. By 'acceptable,' we mean it will not create harm or endanger anything, including aquatic life."

C00846

8:15 a.m., Jan. 12, 1979

MCI PUBLIC RELATIONS REPORT -- STURGEON, MO. DERAILMENT

The lab at Krummrich at about 8:00 a.m. this morning completed analyzing the last of eight air samples from the area of the Sturgeon, Mo., derailment. The results, by converting milligrams per cubic foot to parts per million, were that the samples show "less than .05 ppm." That is one-sixth of 3 ppm governmental TLV standard on phenol exposure.

The information has been transmitted to the EPA's Region Seven Office in Kansas City - Harry Gilmer (816) 374-4461. Monsanto will not release this information to the press. The decision on whether to announce an end to the evacuation is to be made by the EPA and local authorities.

From scores of press calls handled in connection with the incident and initial news media reporting it appears that publicity is heavy and extensive, regionally. I am not aware of any network TV coverage although it is difficult to conclude that there was none. It also appears that reports generally zeroed in on how people were bearing up in the sub-zero evacuation rather than on the scare-type coverage. Larry Connors of KMOX-TV reported incorrectly from the scene that the damaged car was owned by Monsanto. It is a car leased from GATX and efforts are being made to correct the record.

Five representatives of Monsanto are still on the scene to advise local authorities and assist in any way they can. A decision has yet to be made on how the cleanup will be accomplished.

John J. Spano

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C00821

To: R. C. Isham -- B1ND
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STATUS REPORT ON STURGEON, MO. DERAILMENT -- 2:00 p.m., 1/11/79

A chartered plane with air monitoring equipment from the Krummrich Plant was enroute to Columbia, Mo. to help analyze the air at the site of a chemical derailment at Sturgeon, Mo. Joe Wolfsberger, an industrial hygienist, and Frank Basile, an environmental specialist, were on the plane. The team will offer to take air samples and to fly the samples back to our laboratory at Krummrich for analysis. They will join Phil Kirk and Joe Starzak, also from the Krummrich Plant, and Bob Neunreiter, MCI-PR, who arrived at the scene earlier today.

The report from the scene is that the tankcar which is believed to be practically empty, has been moved away. The chlorophenol leaked out on the road bed of the railroad. It is thought that the frozen ground probably would inhibit the liquid from seeping deeply into the ground. The Norfolk and Western railroad has environmental consultants on the scene to direct the cleanup. The Monsanto people are on hand to act in an advisory capacity.

It is thought that at this point it would be best to neutralize the chemical with caustic acid, to excavate the affected area, to put the earth in drums and then transport the drummed material to an appropriate disposal site.

The evacuation¹ of the entire town of some 800 people is still in effect. The people are being directed to churches, schools, and other public buildings as a precautionary measure.

John J. Spano -- MCI-PR

cc: F. E. Reese	C. P. Farley
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C00822

Monsanto Takes Precautions For Sauget Plant Employees

Monsanto Co. has taken precautions to protect a dozen workers in a chemical manufacturing unit at its W.G. Krummrich Plant in Sauget, following a report from federal inspectors that a contaminant harmful to the skin was found at the unit.

The unit makes chlorophenol, an intermediate chemical used by manufacturers of such products as dyes, agricultural chemicals and wood preservatives. Inspectors from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration said they detected the highly toxic substance dioxin on the ground outside the manufacturing unit in a sample taken last February.

OSHA also reported finding dioxin in surface samples inside a chlorophenol unit that had been closed for 1½ years.

"Neither of the OSHA samples are indicative of current worker exposure," Monsanto said. A spokesman added: "We don't feel there are any health hazards posed to the people" involved in manufacture of chlorophenol, which is a corrosive liquid. He said the

dioxin contaminant would produce a certain type of skin acne to those exposed and there have been no reports of this.

Still, the company decided to follow OSHA suggestions for precautions for workers. These include limiting access to the unit, having workers change their clothing and shower after working in the unit, and not allowing the workers to drink or eat at the location.

Monsanto said its own tests recently did not indicate the presence of dioxin. OSHA, in an oral report to the company, said 300 parts per billion of dioxin were found in a product sample taken last February outside the manufacturing unit and that more than 50 percent of the dioxin detected was classified as 2,3,7,8 tetrachlorodibenzo-para-dioxin, a highly toxic chemical substance.

Monsanto said the contaminant detected outside the manufacturing unit was in an area where tank cars are loaded and might have been the result of a small spill.

Chemical Spill Worker Has Complaints

HALLSVILLE, Mo. (AP) — A worker hired to help clean up the chemical spill of a train derailment near Sturgeon Mo., says he wants straight answers about a toxic substance found in his body.

"I'm sitting at home right now, I can't even work," Walter Kidwell, 21, told an interviewer Friday. "Something's wrong with the nerves in my back, and I can't work for the mental

strain of not knowing. I want some facts."

Kidwell and another workman, who has not been identified, were employed by the Western Environmental Services of Portland, Ore., for the cleanup.

A Norfolk & Western freight train derailed Jan. 10, spilling 20,000 gallons of the toxic chemical orthochlorophenol. Monsanto Chemical Co., the manufacturer, later

said the tank car also contained traces of dioxin, a highly toxic chemical.

About 1,000 residents of the area near Sturgeon left their homes for a few days because of the chemical fumes.

Kidwell said he is dissatisfied with the answers he has been getting from the Environmental Protection Agency.

"They tell me not to worry about nothing.

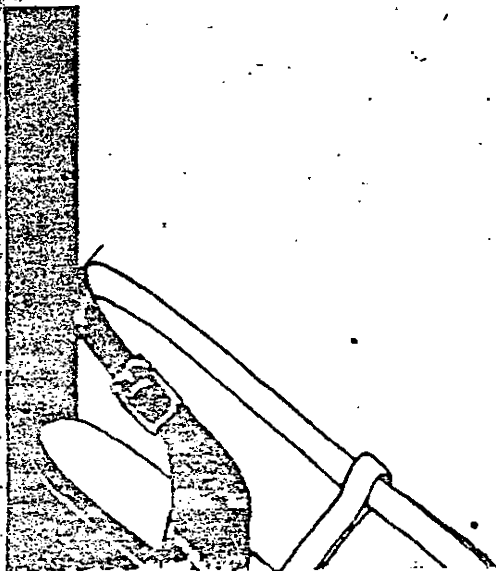
They can't guarantee me 30 days to live. I'd like to have another kid, and I don't know if I can have any more right now with all this dioxin in my blood. I just can't handle it anymore."

Dr. Joseph Seifter, senior medical adviser of the Environmental Protection Agency in Washington, noted that liver and blood tests on Kidwell and the other cleanup worker have been concluded and said:

"In my opinion, nobody has been exposed to a significant degree to orthochlorophenol, phenol and to dioxin." Phenol is a chemical ingredient found with orthochlorophenol.

Kidwell said, "I'll go to Washington if I have to, to get the answers I need. I'm just tired of it. I'm going to raise some hell with these people now."

One rural Sturgeon family living near the site of the spill has filed a \$7.65 million lawsuit; other litigation is threatened.



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