

Ohio Bureau of
Workers' Compensation
Division of Safety & Hygiene
Oliver R. Ocasek Government Office Bldg.
161 South High Street, Room 403
Akron, Ohio 44308

Phone: (216) 379-3370

January 10, 1991

Judy Spencer
Legal Department
Industrial Commission of Ohio
30 W. Spring Street, 9th Floor
Columbus, Ohio 43266-0581

OD 37142-22
Thomas Roush - Dec'd
~~Fisher Body, Elyria Division~~
~~General Motors Corporation~~
~~Elyria, Ohio 44035~~

Dear Ms. Spencer:

Per your request an industrial hygiene evaluation was conducted for the above claim of occupationally induced asbestosis. The Fisher Body plant in Elyria stopped production in 1988 and a site visit could not be made. On December 17, 1990, a visit was made to the General Motors plant in Parma, Ohio, to discuss the claim with Mr. Peter Crowell, Benefits Administrator, and Mr. Chris Curran, and Ms. Oksana Iammarino, Workers' Compensation Department. Mr. Crowell had worked at the Fisher Body Elyria plant prior to its closing and he had personal knowledge of the plant's manufacturing processes and employees.

The Fisher Body plant manufactured various products throughout the years, including urethane foam seats, wheel covers, and various types of engines and die castings. Mr. Crowell stated that General Motors has denied the claim because asbestos was not used in any of the manufacturing processes and Mr. Roush was not exposed to asbestos while employed at the Fisher Body plant.

Mr. Roush's complete work history with Fisher Body was provided by the company. A condensed work history is summarized below:

10/12/48 - 10/03/66	Inspector	18	years
10/03/66 - 01/12/70	Machine operator	3.25	years
01/12/70 - 03/23/70	Assembler	2	months
03/23/70 - 12/07/70	Fire prevention	8	months
12/07/70 - 06/21/71	Assembler	7	months
06/21/71 - 04/01/79	Die room helper	8	years
04/01/79	Retired		

Mr. Roush spent most of his time with Fisher Body as an Inspector, where he visually inspected and gauged parts. He would not have any exposure to asbestos in this position. There is also no indication that there were any exposures to asbestos while employed as a machine operator or an assembler. From information provided in affidavits included in the facsimile file it appears that the time Mr. Roush spent working as a die room floor helper and as a fire prevention man are the times questioned for asbestos exposure.

As a die room floor helper Mr. Roush was responsible for removing and cleaning the dies used in the machines. In this position Mr. Roush worked around the heat treating ovens. Mr. Crowell stated that no asbestos was used in the die cast operation and the heat treat ovens were small ovens that were maintained and repaired by the skilled trades employees, not the die room floor helper. Any relining of the ovens with the fire brick was conducted by an outside contractor. If asbestos was used as insulation in the ovens it is possible that Mr. Roush had bystander exposure when the ovens were repaired.

The claimant worked approximately eight months as a fire prevention man. In this position Mr. Roush was responsible for inspecting the fire extinguishers to ensure that they were operating properly and they had correct pressure. At times he may have had to discharge and refill the fire extinguishers. According to Mr. Crowell the discharging was done very infrequently and it was probably done outdoors. The affidavits in the facsimile file indicated that the claimant was exposed to asbestos while working in this position.

A literature search was conducted by the Division's Resource Center and no information could be found concerning asbestos in fire extinguishers. The Resource Center did find some patents for fire extinguishing agents that included asbestos as a filler substance. There is no way of knowing if the fire extinguishers the claimant checked had any asbestos in them.

Asbestosis is a disorder characterized by a diffuse interstitial pulmonary fibrosis, at times including pleural changes of fibrosis and calcification. Chest x-ray reveals a granular change chiefly in the lower lung fields; as the condition progresses, the heart outline becomes shaggy, and irregular patches of mottled shadowing may be seen. Typically, the patient exhibits restrictive pulmonary function. Accompanying clinical changes may include fine rales, finger clubbing, dyspnea, dry cough, and cyanosis.

The onset of asbestosis probably depends upon asbestos dust concentration, fiber morphology, and the length of exposure. There may also be some factors of individual susceptibility, although it is not possible to identify persons who may have undue susceptibility or resistance to developing asbestosis. It is a progressive disease that may develop fully in 7 to 9 years and may cause death as early as 13 years after first exposure. Usually, pneumoconiosis becomes evident 20 to 40 after the first exposure to asbestos. Once established, asbestosis progresses even after exposure has ceased. (Chemical Hazards of the Workplace, Nick H. Proctor, Ph.D., et. al., 1988, p. 84.)

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In summary, the claimant was employed at the General Motors-Fisher Body plant for approximately 30 years. The Fisher Body plant closed in 1988 and a site visit could not be made. The claimant held several different positions while employed with this company. There is no evidence that indicates that Mr. Roush was routinely exposed to asbestos in the normal course of his work. However, there are affidavits indicating there was occasional exposures while working near the heat treat ovens and when discharging extinguishers. There is really no way of determining if the claimant was definitely exposed at any time during these work duties.

Sincerely,

Natalie Reno

Natalie Reno
Industrial Hygienist