

AMERICAN RAILROADS

OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE DEPARTMENT . SAFETY AND SPECIAL SERVICES DIVISION
SAFETY SECTION . 1920 L STREET, N.W., WASHINGTON, D.C. 20036 . 202/293-4119/4128

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February 6, 1978

File: 6.3

STEERING COMMITTEE AAR SAFETY SECTION



Gentlemen:

This refers to the attached copy of Mr. G. W. Gearhart's letter of January 16, 1978 to me transmitting a Superintendent's General Notice issued on the Rock Island Railroad concerning brake shoes and precautions to be taken in regard to residue dust.

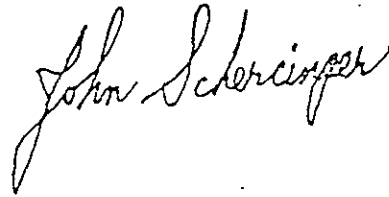
I spoke with Mike Lenahan of the Rock Island. He had received an inquiry from a union representative concerning the possible health hazard to which employees may be exposed when changing brake shoes, due to the presence of asbestos fibers. Mike then checked with Steve Urman of FRA who is familiar with the OSHA standard on exposure to asbestos (copy attached). Mr. Risendal spoke with Mr. Urman who advised that he informed Mr. Lenahan there are two schools of thought on this subject. One is that heat from brake application changes the chemical composition with the result that there is no such hazard. The other one is directly opposite. Mr. Lenahan then checked with his Law Department with the result of the published notice simply as a precaution. The language of the notice, which was not suggested by Steve Urman, was drafted by Mike Lenahan and somewhat revised by the RI Law Department.

Mr. Urman provided the attached two documents on asbestos. One is a paper by Jeremiah R. Lynch, OSHA, entitled Brake Lining Decomposition Products, which deals with an investigation of asbestos fibers in brake linings of automotive vehicles. The other is a study on exposure of garage mechanics titled "Asbestos Exposure During Brake Lining Maintenance And Repair" conducted by the Environmental Sciences Laboratory, Mount Sinai School of Medicine, City University of New York. The Mount Sinai group encountered "high" levels of lead in a study on subway car brake shoe repair work. They admit this data is quite limited and only suggestive of a potential hazard. They do not have data regarding asbestos exposure during subway brake shoe repair work as indicated in their attached December 6, 1976 letter to FRA. It should be noted therein, the Mount Sinai group commented that "Since several kinds of railroad brake shoes include asbestos in their composition, the potential of asbestos exposure during repair work exists."

Mr. Urman also informed us that FRA is letting a contract through its Research and Development office, to determine if there are actually any health hazards. We are checking into the status of this contract.

As requested by Mr. Gearhart, this subject is being docketed for your March 14-15, 1978 meeting.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "John Scherzinger". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned to the right of the word "Sincerely,".

List: WN