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Federal Standards In Chemical Plants Are Criticized

CALVERT CITY, Ky. (AP) — A consultant to the Kentucky Labor Department has criticized federal moves to lower the limit on vinyl chloride concentrations to "zero levels" in plastic plants.

Dr. J. Bradford Block, medical consultant, said he supports the contention of the industry that a federal standard of no detectable amounts of the chemical in the air would have grave economic effects on the industry.

"I don't think they're bluffing," Bradford Block told a group of B. F. Goodrich Co. employees here Tuesday.

The U.S. Labor Department's Occupational Safety and Health Administration has been trying to set standards that would lower to zero the current vinyl chloride limit of 50 parts per million of air.

The limit of 50 was set after reports last winter linked the gas to a rare liver cancer. Five workers at the B. F. Goodrich plant in Louisville have died of the disease. No cases of the cancer have been reported at the plant here.

"I doubt if Goodrich could operate at zero level with the equipment they have now," he said, referring to Goodrich's Louisville plant.

Block told the workers here that if they follow company safety procedures and the company keeps the levels "down to say 15, then I think this is essentially a safe environment, although some people will argue with that."

Block said he hopes the outcome of Labor Department hearings in Washington will be to "get the level as low as possible without putting the companies out of business."

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