

Oakland Tribune
OAKLAND, CALIF.
D. 225,038 SUN, 251,534

AUG 22 1974. *B/KL*

Job Fears in Ban On Vinyl Chloride

WASHINGTON (AP) — Millions of persons would face unemployment if vinyl chloride is banned because it causes cancer, a Senate panel was told yesterday.

Appearing before the environment subcommittee, Ralph L. Harding Jr., president of the Society of the Plastics Industry Inc., noted that 13 vinyl chloride workers have died at four plants. But there are other plants where no such fatalities have occurred, he said.

"There seems to be no dispute at this time that vinyl chloride . . . is a carcinogen in both man or animals," he said. "However, it must be emphasized that the information developed thus far does not yet constitute a body of hard data on the totality of the vinyl chloride hazard."

Harding said the best evidence indicates the workers were exposed to high levels of the chemical for long periods of time.

He said the 13 workers died from liver cancer and had worked in vinyl chloride plants more than 20 years old "where the levels of exposure were substantially higher than those which prevail in the industry today."

He said that if the vinyl chloride industry were forced

to shut down because of an inability to meet government regulations, it would cost the nation's economy 1.7 to 2.2 million jobs and \$165 billion to \$90 billion annually in lost production.

Vinyl chloride is used in making polyvinyl chloride, a widely used plastic resin, which is fabricated in a variety of products including flooring, pipes, curtains, phonograph records, telephone equipment, bottles, packaging and sporting goods.

Dr. Joseph Wagener, of the Center for Disease Control, pointed out that from 1950 to 1973, a total 109 deaths were observed among vinyl chloride workers.

"The number of deaths from liver cancer in this population was almost 12 times the number expected," he said.

He said one worker who died from liver cancer caused by the chemical was exposed to it for only four years. Eighteen years later he was dead, he said.

"This single case is consistent with the tenants of carcinogenesis—that when the carcinogenic process, even in the absence of continued exposure, is irreversible," Dr. Wagener said.

23217175

BFG24463