

Expensive Handling, Health Facilities Required

OSHA Issues Final MOCA Standards

By AP Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON, Jan. 29—The Occupational Safety and Health Administration today settled the question of whether MOCA® is to be regulated as a cancer-producing chemical.

MOCA, DuPont's brand name for 4,4'-Methylene bis-(2-chloroaniline), a polyurethane curing agent, is included among the 14 alleged cancer-producing chemicals for which final OSHA standards on employee exposure were published today.

Though amended somewhat from proposed standards published last year, final rules issued today will require specific employee protective measures and will limit the amount of MOCA in solid or

liquid mixtures to 1 percent by weight or volume.

Dropped from the earlier proposed regulations was a requirement for an OSHA permit to make, use or handle MOCA.

Retained, however, are requirements for a so-called "closed loop" or "closed system" for handling MOCA, special clothing for workers, decontamination methods including shower and lavatory facilities and medical surveillance programs to be maintained at no cost to employees.

OSHA's earlier proposed rules were assailed on several counts by the Polyurethane Manufacturers Association, for whose members the burden of compli-

ance is expected to be costly if not prohibitive.

PMA HAD CHARGED, among other things, that OSHA lacked conclusive evidence proving MOCA to be cancer-producing in humans. OSHA tests on mice, PMA said, should not be used to extrapolate similar results in humans.

Evidence to back up PMA's claims has been suggested by DuPont itself. The company has been running tests for some time on dogs, rather than mice, on grounds that "man's best friend" is closer kin to man himself than rodents.

Spokesmen for DuPont say that its tests so far have failed to show any evidence of MOCA-related cancer in the dogs.

IN PROMULGATING rules for MOCA and, separately, for the 13 other chemicals labeled cancer-producing, OSHA brushed aside arguments that tests on mice are inconclusive with respect to likely human reactions.

"We think it improper to afford less protection to workers when exposed to substances found to be carcinogenic [cancer-producing] only in experimental animals," the agency said.

"Once the carcinogenicity of a substance has been demonstrated in animal experiments, the practical regulatory alternatives are to consider them either non-carcinogenic or carcinogenic to humans, until evidence to the contrary is produced.

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"About all the dogs have gotten so far," RPN was told, "are fleas."

DuPont has continued to produce MOCA under the temporary emergency standards imposed by OSHA last year. Spokesmen say there has been minimal impact on output or costs as a result of compliance, largely because the firm has long treated MOCA as a "nasty actor," a messy, highly corrosive substance if not a carcinogen, and has controlled employee exposure all along.

DuPont spokesmen concede, however, that few of its customers, particularly smaller firms, will be able to accommodate the new OSHA standards without "major dislocations."

It was hinted that the company would try to help where it could, particularly in procedures for testing content of MOCA in polyurethane products.

"The first alternative would logically require, not relaxed controls on exposure, but exclusion from regulation. The other alternative logically leads to the treatment of a substance as if it was known to be carcinogenic to man."

OTHER SUBSTANCES for which OSHA standards were issued include 2-Acetylaminofluorene; 3,3'-Dichlorobenzidine (and its salts); 4-Dimethylaminobenzene; alpha-Naphthylamine; N-Nitrosodimethylamine; beta-Propiolactone; Ethyleneimine; 4-Aminodiphenyl; Benzidine (and its salts); 4-Nitrobiphenyl; Methyl chloromethyl ether; beta-Naphthylamine, and bis-Chloromethyl ether.

Assistant Secretary of Labor John H. Stender, who heads OSHA, explained that separate standards were issued for each substance "to make it easier for employers to determine what they must do to protect their employees from these hazardous substances."

Commenting generally on the thrust of the standards for each of the substances, Stender noted that the basic approach set forth for handling is by "an isolated, fully closed, system achieved by engineering controls."

The reason for the general ban on "open vessel operations" in which employees are exposed to the raw chemicals, Stender said, is that "engineering control, such as by closed systems, mechanical seals, remote controls and local exhaust ventilation...most effectively isolates employees from potential contamination."

COMMENTING on the exclusion of solid and liquid mixtures containing less than 1 percent of MOCA (extended to seven of the 13 other chemicals as well), Stender noted that the intent was to "avoid substantial obstruction, if not stoppage, of the use of many processes and products which are considered useful in industry...."

The standards made public today are to become mandatory on February 11.

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BFG Probe of Cancer Deaths Implicates PVC

AKRON, Feb. 1—In an unprecedented move that sent reverberations throughout the plastics industry, B.F. Goodrich last week disclosed that it had alerted Kentucky health officials and the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) to the possibility that three cancer deaths in its Louisville, Ky. plant were related to occupational exposure to health hazards.

The Louisville plant deaths affected employees working in polyvinyl chloride (PVC) production. The original announcement was based on two deaths in 1973 and one that occurred in 1971—and today a Goodrich spokesman confirmed that their on-going review of past medical records has revealed another related death in 1968.

The deaths were all attributed to angiosarcoma—a rare form of liver cancer that claims only 21 lives annually in the whole U.S.A.

Federal health inspectors rushed to the plant within 48 hours, and NIOSH announced plans to develop stringent handling and exposure practices for PVC operations, possibly within a few weeks.

Neither BFG or NIOSH experts are able to finger a specific material as the carcinogenic agent responsible for the deaths.

There is no apparent violation of the existing federal standard for vinyl chloride vapor exposure—500 ppm on a time-weighted-average basis. Goodrich reports maximum exposures in the 50 to 100 ppm range in its plants.

Goodrich has engaged the services of Tabershaw-Cooper Associates (Berkeley, Calif.) as consultants on the direction of their investigations.

Yet another investigative agency has entered the picture, as the United Rubber Workers (URW) have turned the University of North Carolina loose on a "crash epidemiological study" of URW locals involved in PVC production. (The Goodrich Louisville plant is not organized under the URW).

Goodrich's voluntary disclosure is a "first ever for alerting NIOSH to a serious health problem."

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PMA May Sue OSHA Over MOCA Rules

CHICAGO, Feb. 6—The Polyurethane Manufacturers Association said today it probably will institute legal action against the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) for including MOCA® as one of 14 alleged cancer-

For story on OSHA's permanent standards for MOCA, see Page 6. For related story involving PVC as a possible carcinogen, see Page 10.

producing chemicals for which it published final OSHA standards on employee exposure Jan. 29.

PMA, which in the past has charged that OSHA lacks conclusive evidence proving MOCA to be cancer-producing in humans, said its attorneys are now studying the possibility of a suit.

Meanwhile, PMA has joined the Synthetic Organic Chemical Manufacturers Assn. (SOCMA), two other trade associations and a number of chemical companies in filing a suit to seek judicial review of OSHA's permanent work safety standards.

The suit was filed in the Court of Appeals, third circuit, in Philadelphia, Jan. 29, the same day OSHA published its regulations.

Polyurethane manufacturers, who use MOCA in their products, and at the end users of the parts, could be hard hit by the permanent standards. Some polyurethane parts can't be cured satisfactorily with anything but MOCA.

OSHA Calls for PVC Hazard Data

WASHINGTON, Jan. 30—The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) today announced that it would conduct a hearing February 15 "on possible hazards associated with the manufacture and/or use of vinyl chloride."

The hearing was apparently prompted by recent disclosure that Goodrich was investigating the cancer deaths of three workers at a Louisville, Ky. plant. The workers had been involved in PVC production.

Meanwhile, OSHA has requested written data from any interested parties, relating to toxicity of vinyl chloride and other chemicals used in its production.

Also sought is information on technologies and numbers of workers involved in the manufacture and use of the material and opinions as to "whether the available information warrants the issuance of an emergency temporary standard, or the commencement of a regular rulemaking proceeding."

Deadline for submission of such data was set for Feb. 28.

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