

Vinyl chloride is a flammable gas with a sweet pleasant odor. It is used to make a solid material called polyvinyl chloride. As PVC it has a multitude of uses in the plastics industry as pipe, records, insulation, upholstery, kitchen food wraps, shower curtains, floor tiles, and many more every day plastic products. The vinyl chloride gas has been used as an anesthetic agent and as a propellant in spray cans. It has long been recognized that the gas in high concentrations of 6,000 to 80,000 parts per million may cause lightheadedness or wooziness, symptoms resembling drunkenness, and even death. On removal from exposure to fresh air, the symptoms usually clear up quickly.

In January, 1974, three deaths due to a rare cancer of the liver were discovered in workers who had had a long-term high level exposure to vinyl chloride. Subsequently an intensive search of all former vinyl chloride workers and medical testing of active workers uncovered fifteen cases out of 6,000 workers since 1961. This is statistically significant since only about twenty cases of this cancer affecting the walls of the blood vessels of the liver are reported each year. It is called angiosarcoma and this cancer has also been caused by arsenic and by an x-ray dye called thorium dioxide. Animal experimentation has also produced this condition in mice by long-term exposures of 50 ppm of vinyl chloride.

Every employee will be offered an examination prior to being assigned work in the regulated area. The examination may be repeated annually for

UCC 094813

the first ten years; following this it will be offered every 6 months.

The examination will consist of a medical history with special attention directed towards drug and chemical exposures, hepatitis or other liver disease, blood transfusions, alcoholic intake and smoking. A blood sample will be drawn for analysis of five special liver function tests and finally a clinical examination will be performed with special attention being directed towards detecting enlargement of the liver or spleen. These tests are not for diagnosing a cancer but are intended only as a screening to determine whether or not the employee is at any risk in continuing to work in the regulated area and whether he may safely use a respirator.

The results of the examination are available to you and to your personal physician on request. By law they may also be inspected by an OSHA compliance officer. They will be kept by the Medical Department indefinitely.

The examination is purely voluntary on your part. If you do not choose to take it we request you sign a statement to this effect. You will again be offered the examination at the appropriate intervals.

The Medical Division will welcome any questions concerning acute or chronic toxicity of vinyl chloride and will be happy to provide you or your physician with any information we have.