

# Union Carbide says cancer deaths not job-related

BY MARK TOOHEY  
Chronicle Staff

TEXAS CITY — Although brain cancer deaths among workers at the Union Carbide plant here exceed the national average, the company says the deaths are not job-related.

Results released Wednesday of a 20-month study by Union Carbide indicate that the number of those workers who died of brain cancer is higher than what would be expected.

The company said brain cancer caused the deaths of 12 employees from 1941, when the plant began operations, to Dec. 31, 1977. The company said 765 plant workers and former workers died during that same period. Comparing the data to national rates, the company said that 7.42 deaths due to brain cancer would be expected. The deaths occurred among 6,588 plant employees.

Although the study covered 12 brain cancer deaths, Union Carbide officials said that actually 20 employees with brain tumors have died to date. The study was limited to white males who died before or during 1977. The other eight

deaths included four black males, and four workers who died after Dec. 31, 1977. Another Union Carbide employee was diagnosed three months ago as having brain cancer and is still living. Officials said these were not included for statistical reasons.

Both Union Carbide and the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health Administration began separate studies in March 1979 to determine whether a correlation existed between brain cancer deaths and exposure to chemicals used at the Texas City plant.

The company and the federal agency used the same data in their studies. Results of the NIOSH study, however, have not been released.

The federal agency earlier this year, while in the midst of its study, said brain cancer deaths at Union Carbide appeared to be excessively high and job-related.

Damon Engle, plant manager at Union Carbide, said results of the government study are expected soon.

Engle and Dr. David Glenn, plant physician, attributed the higher brain cancer rate at Union Carbide's Texas City plant to chance, not to chemical exposure at the plant.

Union Carbide is a diversified petrochemical manufacturing facility with a large number of major product lines. During the years worker deaths were studied, those have included ethylene, butadiene, naptha, alcohols, plastics and resins, including vinyl chloride. A known carcinogen, vinyl chloride, is used in the manufacturing process at the plant, but no longer is produced at the plant.

The company, said Glenn and Susan Austin, corporate epidemiologist for Union Carbide, was unable to "associate these brain cancer deaths with any particular chemical exposure."

"The types of brain cancer are present

in the same percentages as that seen in the general population," said Glenn. "Ordinarily, chemically caused cancer is a specific and often unusual type, different than those seen in the general population. Finally, excessive brain cancer has not been confirmed in chemical plants similar to ours in other parts of the country."

Plant manager Engle said letters have been sent to the plant's 2,400 present employees informing them of the results.

"My message to them (employees) is that there is no cause for alarm," said Engle. He said the company would continue its investigation.

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