



BUREAU OF
WORKERS' COMPENSATION

Division of Safety & Hygiene, Oliver R. Ocasck Government Office Bldg.
Room 403, 161 South High Street, Akron, Ohio 44308

PLAINTIFF'S
EXHIBIT
BRK-131

Phone: (216) 379-3370

February 1, 1991

Legal Section
The Industrial Commission of Ohio
30 W. Spring St., 9th Floor
Columbus, OH 43266-0581

Re: OD 39672-22
James R. Kois
General Motors Assembly
Warren, OH 44482

Attention: Judy Spencer

Dear Ms. Spencer:

At your request, this report has been prepared based upon information which you have provided in the facsimile file, and from additional information provided by union and management representatives during January 9 and January 14, 1991 visits to the General Motors Van Assembly Plant, located in Lordstown, Ohio. Contacted at the plant during these visits were the following individuals:

Mr. Carmen Pompeii - Safety Director
Ms. Paula Robsel - Safety Engineer
Mr. Robert Walter - Union Health & Safety Representative
Mr. Craig Nicholas - Union Health & Safety Representative

This claimant, on his application for an occupational disease claim, describes his condition as "chemical sensitivity, allergic rhinitis". Although not providing information on when symptoms first appeared, he states that the condition was diagnosed on December 15, 1989. In his summary of history of employment, Mr. Kois states that he was hired by General Motors on March 1, 1978 and, although not describing his duties for the "first four or five years", states that he was not exposed to "chemicals" during this period. He also states that his alleged health problems began during the last eight years, when he worked at various jobs in the paint department of the van assembly plant.

Transferring to the paint department on November 7, 1983, Mr. Kois first worked as a spray painter for a very short period, less than three weeks. For approximately the next three and a half years, until August of 1987, the claimant performed various light sanding duties carried out just prior to the finish painting of vans.

Beginning in August of 1987, up until April 3, 1990, Mr. Kois worked at two operations where he claims he used various chemicals which he believed led to his alleged health problems. For approximately one and a half years, he worked at an operation where the van bodies are washed with a water soluble soap-type product (PPG - Chemkleen 338) to remove oil and grease from the unpainted van bodies. For the remainder of the period between 1987 and April of 1990, when he went on extended sick leave, the claimant worked as a right side skiver in the sealer room. In this work he applied dough-like water proofing sealer to cracks and seams and smoothed out the sealer with a sponge damped in Shell 71 - odorless mineral spirits.

Regarding possible employee exposures in these areas, the results of OSHA and company air monitoring have not indicated any excessive exposures to the constituents of Chemkleen 338 in the body washing area or to odorless mineral spirits in the sealer room. At the van washing operation, the results of several OSHA samples averaged approximately 10 mg/M³ for petroleum distillates (naphtha), while the OSHA time weighted average (TWA) permissible exposure limit, at the time of sampling, was 2000 mg/M³. The present OSHA limit has been reduced to 1600 mg/M³. Butyl Carbitol, another chemical sampled for in the van wash area by OSHA, was not detected.

In the sealer room, even though the supplier indicates that there are no established exposure limits for odorless mineral spirits, repeated air monitoring, carried out by representatives of union and management, have never indicated excessive concentrations of contaminants of any type. It should be noted that it has never been deemed necessary to wear respiratory protection in these areas, a requirement of OSHA when excessive vapor concentrations are present.

Although, apparently no excessive exposures to air contaminants exist in these areas, the diagnosis of chemical sensitivity and allergic rhinitis would indicate that this claimant may be hypersensitive to some substance or substances in his place of work. Working in or near painting operations, there is a possibility of contact with trace concentrations of many materials. Even when these concentrations are within the suggested exposure limits, if an individual is atopic, having a genetic tendency toward allergies, there is a possibility of hypersensitivity reactions to substances which he uses or others use in his work area.

If, in fact, Mr. Kois has experienced a hypersensitive reaction to some material in the workplace, it is likely that the symptoms will occur upon any contact with the causative agent or agents, even at trace concentrations, well within the limits which have been established by OSHA and the American Conference of Governmental Industrial Hygienists. Although it is widely

recognized that there is hardly anything that has not provided allergic reactions in some individuals, it should be noted that the materials being used in these work areas are not generally recognized as being strong sensitizing agents. Once an individual has become sensitized to some substance in the workplace, to avoid future reactions, they should consider moving to another department or changing their occupation if possible.

"Threshold limit values refer to airborne concentrations of substances and represent conditions under which it is believed that nearly all workers may be repeatedly exposed day after day without adverse effect. Because of wide variation in individual susceptibility, however, a small percentage of workers may experience discomfort from some substances at concentrations at or below the threshold limit; a smaller percentage may be affected more seriously by aggravation of a pre-existing condition or by development of an occupational illness."
(Threshold Limit Values for Chemical Substances in the Work Environment Adopted by ACGIH with Intended Changes for 1989-90, p. 3.)

Sincerely,

Donald B. Meeker

Donald B. Meeker
Industrial Hygienist

DBM/jmc