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TO: Mr. John Hawkins

March 15, 1974

SUBJECT: McGill Study of Asbestos Safety Garments

✓ OK

I am enclosing a copy of comments by John Magenheimer on your memo to me of March 6 as well as some of my own.

I cannot agree with you that the research was poorly done and must point out that Dr. Gibbs, who is a member of Dr. Corbett McDonald's team at McGill University, has a worldwide reputation as an expert on the biological effects of asbestos. We were fortunate that his services were made available to us.

John Magenheimer has commented at some length concerning the first point you raised relative to the use of the British procedure. As John noted, the NIOSH procedure does not call for fixing. Dr. Gibbs chose this procedure deliberately to avoid the possibility of migration of fibers while the membranes were being transported from Pittsburgh to the Laboratory in Montreal. Dr. Gibbs is a member of the Joint Aerosol Hazards Committee of the ACGIH and the AHI. He is considered to be an expert on the methods for evaluating airborne fiber. The relative merits of the different procedures have been debated in the Committee for some time. Dr. Gibbs chose the British method because it provided an added measure of safety.

I think John Magenheimer's comments adequately cover the other points with the exception of the comment about Table VI. There was an erasure in the original document. John Magenheimer received a carbon copy of the original which showed the correct figure of 12.3. You received a xerox copy of the original in which the erased digit "1" showed up. This error occurred in my office. My apologies.

I should like to point out that this investigation was initiated in part by requests from safety garment manufacturers for assurances that the use of asbestos containing safety garments posed absolutely no health hazard and that the use of such garments did not create conditions in violation of the OSHA standards on airborne concentrations. In addition a specific problem was encountered at U.S. Steel where union officials complained to management that the use of asbestos containing garments might cause lung cancer.

The McGill Study showed there are some problems we had not anticipated. However; it appears these problems can be solved either by special treatment of conventional fabrics, or the use of NOVATEX, or both. The information available to us should be used in a positive manner to give us a competitive advantage and to avoid any undesirable publicity that might result from testing programs conducted by others on asbestos containing protective clothing.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

CC: Dr. J. J. Magenheimer
Dr. J. T. Trainor

John H. Marsh

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