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DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE

PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE

Occupational Health Research & Training Facility
Bureau of State Services
1014 Broadway
Cincinnati 2, Ohio

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December 8, 1966

Mr. W. P. Ellis
Director of Research
Benjamin Foster Company
4535-37 West Girard Avenue
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19131

copy to Reg 7 Sturz 1/6/67

Dear Mr. Ellis:

This letter is in response to your request for published information on the subject of the occupational hazard of asbestos fiber dust as an atmospheric air pollutant.

The name, asbestos, is used to cover a group of fibrous mineral silicates. Many studies have been reported in the literature and there is indication that the inhalation of significant amounts of asbestos dust over an extended period of time can produce in certain individuals a respiratory disorder, a pneumoconiosis referred to as asbestosis. This occupational disease is characterized primarily by cough, dyspnea, basal crepitations, and reticulonodular shadowing of the chest roentgenogram. There are also reports of chronic bronchitis and emphysema that may be associated with this disease, the emphysema being of a more localized thin a diffused obstructive type. There are also reports of incidents of lung carcinoma associated with asbestosis. The most consistent pathological change is a dense fibrosis containing macrophages with absorbed dust particles which in many areas obliterates the pulmonary architecture. However, there is controversy among investigators studying the inhalation of asbestos, particularly as to the reality and severity of the problem and whether or not all types of asbestos produce such reactions in the body. Studies and surveys of asbestos exposures have been hindered to some extent by the lack of good specific techniques for the sampling and determination of asbestos concentrations in the air. Therefore, our information is not nearly as complete or precise as would be desirable. Because of these many factors, the Division of Occupational Health has recently undertaken the study of the health and environmental conditions of workers handling asbestos. The investigation will include the environmental and medical aspects of the disease but these studies are expected to take many years, for asbestosis is a chronic, slowly-developing disease, therefore it will be quite some time before the studies are completed and the findings become available.

The American Conference of Governmental Industrial Hygienists has adopted threshold limit values (TLV's) for many substances found in industry. For asbestos the TLV is 5 million particles per cubic foot of air, a time-weighted average exposure for a normal eight-hour workday. To determine whether or not a health hazard does exist in a given

work area an environmental health study should be made by an industrial hygienist. After such a study he could make recommendations for control measures, if needed. You may wish to call upon the official industrial hygiene agency in your area for their professional guidance and assistance which is available to you. The address of this agency is: Division of Occupational Health, Pennsylvania Department of Health, Health and Welfare Building, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17120. This organization also has a regional office in the State Office Building, Broad and Spring Garden Streets, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19130 (Telephone: 568-4000, Ext. 8174). There is also a local health department agency for the City of Philadelphia. Its address is: Occupational and Radiological Health Section, Division of Environmental Health, Philadelphia Department of Public Health, 500 S. Broad Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19146 (Telephone: MU 6-5155).

We are enclosing a relatively short list of references on asbestosis. We would particularly point out the third reference from the bottom of page 3 entitled: The Biological Effects of Asbestos, published in the Annals of the New York Academy of Science. This is quite a lengthy publication and covers many aspects of asbestos. The last article by Morris Kleinfeld is one of the more recent articles pertaining to the effect of asbestos dust inhalation on lung function.

We hope the information furnished will be helpful and if we can be of any further service we shall be glad to do so.

Sincerely yours,

DEC 14 1966

Enclosure

Elbridge Morrill, Sr.
Industrial Hygienist
Technical Information Section

cc: Pennsylvania Department of Health
Philadelphia Department of Public Health
Region II Program Director

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