W. J. Wilcox

ACTION PROGRAM CONCERNING VINYL CHLORIDE STANDARD

The vinyl chloride health hazard came to the Department of Labor through a recent public announcement by The B.F.Goodrich Company in mid-January. Since that time we have aggressively addressed the problem by several actions.

A public hearing was held on February 15. The record of this hearing was held open by the Hearing Officer until March 8. OSHA has made a number of visitations to facilities where vinyl chloride, monomer and polymer, are manufactured. We have gathered all factual statistics available to us. NIOSH has been actively investigating the magnitude of this serious problem.

Based on facts available and judgments of law an Emergency Standard will be filed in the Federal Register very soon. (Federal Register next week effective approximately April 1st.)

The Emergency Standard will amend our present Sub-Part G, 1910.93, to provide for 50 ppm (currently 500 ppm) as a ceiling on exposure to vinyl chloride by employees. It further will provide that employers must regularly monitor work areas. Also, in any area where exposure exceeds the 50 ppm, employees must be provided, and must use fresh air supply respirators.

NIOSH has developed a proposed work practices document for vinyl chloride. OSHA will file in the Federal Register as a proposed permanent standard for vinyl chloride a proposed rule based on the work practices document proposed by NIOSH. A final decision, as to a permanent standard, will be made upon conclusion of the rule making procedure based upon the record and facts then available.

In conclusion I might add that I once said there would never be another Emergency Standard issued while I was in charge of OSHA. I guess at my age I should never said "never." However experience with the Emergency Pesticide Standard and the Emergency Carcinogen Standard very definitely created more problems than they resolved. They really did not speed the protection of employees very much. In the case of Pesticide, we do not have a work standard yet. With this experience in mind, I took a "close look" at what was involved in the vinyl chloride matter. The 500 ppm now in the standard very definitely is useless in our field compliance efforts. The Maltoni Research Study indicated cancerous tumors in animals came from exposure to 250 ppm vinyl chloride. However, the research indicated that no tumors were found upon exposure to animals at 50 ppm. 50 ppm, as an Emergency Standard, will give our OSHA field compliance staff a base from which they can work in this industry to monitor work place employee exposure.

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We expect to have our field people begin checking work practices in the entire vinyl industry almost immediately. We will require detail reporting from the field offices to our OSHA-NIOSH team who will be assigned the task, on a full time basis, of developing a permanent vinyl chloride standard.

/s/ John H. Stender
Assistant Secretary
Occupational Safety and
Health Administration

cc: Secretary Brennan - Secretary of Labor

The above is essentially a press release which Dr. Roger W. Strassburg received today at a luncheon he attended in Washington, D. C. which was attended by John H. Stender.

Copies to:
Mr. W. C. Becker
Mr. J. J. Bell
Dr. M. N. Johnson
Mr. T. B. Nantz
Mr. J. D. Ong
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Dictated by phone from Washington, D. C.
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