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PLAINTIFF'S
EXHIBIT
BRK-129

Phone: (216) 379-3370

February 6, 1991

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

Re: OD 39742-22
Raymond D. Wagner
GM - 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, whose condition has been diagnosed as "pleural fibrosis", has been employed by General Motors since 1966. From information provided in the facsimile file and during the plant visit, Mr. Wagner has apparently worked the entire period of his employment as a "booth cleaner". In cleaning the lacquer paint spray booths, and paint spraying equipment (guns and hoses), the booth cleaners presently use Hasco Stingray, and Hasco Kleen-All 100 paint strippers. Prior to January of 1988, the booth cleaners used Texo 861 (methylene chloride) to clean the paint booths.

In addition to cleaning paint booths, the booth cleaners are responsible for cleaning the booth in which sound-deadener is applied to the vans. It should be noted that no chemicals are used to clean the sound-deadener booth. In this booth rolls of heavy paper are suspended at the tops of both sides of the booth. The booth is cleaned simply by removing the soiled paper and pulling sheets of clean paper into place on the sides of the booth. It should be noted, although no chemicals were used to clean the sound-deadener booth, that the sound-deadening material

itself (Allied 7606 Sound Deadener) contained 4% asbestos, however this asbestos was not in a friable form and was totally encapsulated in the sound-deadener. As of April of 1990, this material is no longer used.

Regarding possible exposures of the claimant, while cleaning the paint booths, up until 1986 when air-supplied respirators became a requirement for the booth cleaners, this individual likely experienced some exposures to unknown concentrations of methylene chloride. During the plant visits a union representative reported that air-samples for methylene chloride obtained on the booth cleaners were as high as three times the OSHA time-weighted average (TWA) limit, however these samples were obtained over one to two hour periods, during the period of highest possible exposure, and would not be truly representative of an individual's time-weighted exposure. In addition to this sampling, on June 17, 1985, an OSHA compliance officer obtained several samples for short-term exposure to methylene chloride during the use of Texo 861 at booth cleaning operations. In six separate samples, methylene chloride was not detected. OSHA inspection notes indicate that the booth cleaners wore proper protective equipment while cleaning the booths, including respirators with organic-vapor cartridges. In addition the downdraft ventilation in these large walk-in spray booths was in operation during booth cleaning which is apparently carried out for only one to two hours a day. From this information it is unclear exactly what sort of methylene chloride exposures the booth cleaners regularly experienced, but it is unlikely that TWA exposures were excessive.

As mentioned earlier, with discontinuation of the use of Texo 861 (methylene chloride) in January of 1988, the booth cleaners began using Hasco Stingray and Hasco Kleen-All 100 in their booth cleaning activities. Hasco Stingray, a heavy viscous emulsion, is applied to the booth walls and floor grates and is hosed down with high pressure water. Although this material contains amorphous silica, it is important to note that the silica is contained in a viscous liquid, with little or no likelihood of dust becoming airborne during its use.

The chief ingredient of both Hasco products is "heavy aromatic solvent naphtha (petroleum)". The material safety data sheet (MSDS) for Stingray states that no ACGIH or OSHA limits have been established, while the MSDS for Kleen-All lists an OSHA limit of 100 ppm (TWA), but does not provide an ACGIH limit. As in the use of methylene chloride, with the use of available ventilation, protective equipment and considering the relatively short periods of exposure on any given eight-hour day, excessive exposures are not likely.

Reviewing the health hazards associated with overexposures to the materials which the claimant has used in cleaning paint booths, the material data sheets mainly discuss eye, skin and respiratory irritation, and central nervous system effects

(lightheadedness and headaches). There is no indication on the data sheets that the use of these materials has ever been associated with the development of pleural fibrosis.

Considering possible exposures while changing the protective paper used at the sound deadener booth, as discussed earlier, the sound deadener material, up until early 1990, contained approximately 4% asbestos. Exposures to friable (easily crumbled or pulverized) asbestos can lead to the development of pleural fibrosis, however, in this situation the asbestos was totally encapsulated in the sound deadener material, which is a black paste-like substance with the appearance of asphalt. In this encapsulated form, individual airborne asbestos fibers are not likely.

In repeated contact with the supplier of the sound deadener, both the union and management representatives have been advised that the asbestos in their product is no longer friable and was completely encapsulated in the paste-like material. Management added that in attempts to monitor for asbestos, no free fibers were observed, indicating that any asbestos present was in fact encapsulated and no longer in a friable form.

In support of statements regarding asbestos exposure, when the material is encapsulated in some other substance and no longer friable, the following references are provided:

1. Encyclopedia of Occupational Health and Safety, Third Edition, Volume 1 International Labour Office, 1983, p. 190.

"Exposure (to asbestos) is much less when the fiber is bound in the product (asbestos cement and asbestos plastic and paper products)."

2. A Physician's Guide to Asbestos-Related Diseases, Council on Scientific Affairs, Journal of AMA, Vol. 252, No. 18, Nov. 9, 1984, p. 2594.

"Nonfriable products, which do not release fibers into the air, are not dangerous."

3. Occupational Lung Diseases (An Introduction) American Lung Association, 1983, p. 40.

"In most modern products, the asbestos fibers are locked-in or encapsulated by binders such as cement, rubber, on plastics so that the fibers are not easily released during normal use."

From these references and statements provided during the company visits, even though the sound deadener contained small amounts of asbestos, in its encapsulated form, asbestos apparently is not a hazard. In this non-friable form, asbestos is not likely to be the cause of the individual's diagnosed condition.

In summary, a review of jobs performed by the claimant and materials used while he has been employed at General Motors, do not indicate the possibility of exposures which are normally associated with the development of pleural fibrosis. Also, even though this individual has been a fairly heavy cigarette smoker for over 30 years, it should be noted that the major adverse effects of smoking on the lung function are obstructive in nature. Smoking, although it may complicate the diagnosis, is not associated with the development of fibrosis. Possibly, prior to 1966, when, at the age of 33, this individual was first hired by General Motors, he may have experienced exposures which could be associated with his diagnosed condition. There is nothing available in the facsimile file which indicated the previous work history of this claimant.

Sincerely yours,

Donald B. Meeker

Donald B. Meeker
Industrial Hygienist

DBM/jmc

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