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Turner & Newall Limited
Operations Committee Meeting
10th June 1977

Labelling of Asbestos Products

Mr. Hills, Mr. Atkinson and I have recently discussed possible Group policy on the labelling of asbestos products and the related issue of health risk warnings, aspects of which have given rise to legal disquiet.

As the Committee knows, Havelock and Bell Mines have for some time incorporated the United States OSHA warning in their sales documentation and on bags. The unilateral decision of Lake Asbestos may force Bell to go further in their warning than present US legislation requires. Atlas also uses the OSHA warning, except for pressure pipes.

In the United Kingdom, s. 6 of the Health & Safety at Work Act requires us to warn customers of potential danger in using Group materials. Since the end of 1974, all catalogues, sales literature and documentation have included reference to this statutory obligation. Since October 1976, products have been marked on a voluntary basis under the scheme which the AIC has agreed with the Health & Safety Executive and the Department of Prices and Consumer Protection. The wording of the "label" is

"Take care with asbestos"

Warning

Breathing asbestos dust
can damage health

Observe the safety rules

The products covered by the scheme are most of the asbestos-containing products made by the Group, but exclude asbestos-cement pressure pipes, gaskets and jointings. (Notwithstanding this exemption, TAC has decided to mark pressure pipes.) The UK industry hopes that importers of materials containing asbestos will get their overseas suppliers to use the AIC label.

Other countries are looking at the question of labelling, notably Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Holland and the EEC. In this context, the meeting of leading international asbestos companies, held in London in January 1977, agreed that if there was a danger of a Government introducing a statutory scheme it would be desirable for the industry in that country to promulgate its own scheme first. Moreover, and with only Belgian dissent, the meeting was in favour of adopting a label similar to the British design, although the precise wording might have to vary according to local circumstances.

Legislation apart, there seems to be a strong case for T&N to introduce a standard practice for labelling products and warning customers. To do so would be consistent with Group policy as stated in the Code of Business Practice (paras 2(b) and 5(a)). Moreover, in our public statements we deny that we have lower standards for the developing countries than for our UK operations.

The purpose of this paper is to stimulate discussion on the topic, and to give that discussion a finite framework I recommend that Divisional Chief Executives should now initiate discussion with the Chief Executives of the asbestos companies overseas proposing that

1. literature and sales documentation should include the following words:

Warning

Many asbestos based materials are subject to regulations in different parts of the world which require precautions to be taken to ensure that they will be safe and without risks to health when properly used. Except when the fibres are so well bound that asbestos dust cannot be given off in potentially dangerous concentrations, users ought to observe those precautions, and they are set out in the Company's sales literature. If you have any doubts, please apply to — for your copy.

2. they should adapt the AIC label for use within their own country;
3. they should endeavour to persuade other asbestos companies in their countries of operation to go along with them in the use of such a label, but to make it quite clear that in the event of failure to agree by a specific date, the T&N subsidiary will act unilaterally.

4. Up to date
• visit a
local dealer.

H. D. S. HARDIE