FILE NAME: Firestone (FIRE)

DATE: 1986 Apr 10

DOC#: FIRE042

DOCUMENT DESCRIPTION: Report - Statements to Use RE: Chemical Exposure Suits [Ex. 978]

B.C. Notes - "Statements to Use" on chemical exposures & Asbestos, report includes statement that Firestone had monitored Asbestos exposures in plants since 1970

STATEMENTS TO USE RE: CHEMICAL EXPOSURE SUITS

LEGAL:

Firestone will not comment on the specifics of the suit filed today in Salinas until we have had an opportunity to review its contents. However, we are surprised by the allegations of the Los Angeles law firm which appears to be attempting to stir up unnecessary and unfounded concern among current and former Firestone tire plant employees and their families about the health and safety of employees in our plants. Firestone is a recognized national industrial leader in developing and implementing programs to assure the health and safety well-being of our employees.

GENERAL:

The health and safety of our employees are the prime concern of Firestone in operation of our manufacturing facilities.

Firestone has had and continues to have safety programs in place throughout its tire plants to make certain that any employee exposure to chemicals is safely within all applicable Federal, state and local regulations. In many cases, Firestone officials have been called upon by appropriate health and environmental agencies to help establish the very regulations by which we are governed.

(more)

Pltf Exh
978

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BATO/JACKSON 043532

GENERAL:(cont.)

Firestone and members of the United Rubber Workers have joint committees on the corporate level and in individual plants to review the appropriate guidelines and our operations to make certain employees are not exposed to health hazards. Jointly with the URW, we support a health surveillance program in which employees are voluntarily monitored for respiratory problems or any other health factors which could develop from exposure to chemicals. Results of this employee medical surveillance program have not indicated to Firestone, the URW or the medical testing agency that any unsafe chemical exposure exists in our plants.

BENZENE:

Firestone does not use benzene in its pure form anywhere in its tire building process. Benzene does exist as a small impurity in the solvent we use as a tackifier in the tire assembly. Employee exposure to this small amount of benzene is within current and proposed Federal benzene guidelines and does not pose a health threat to those employees working with the solvent.

Dr. Alan G. Altenau, Firestone's director of technology, points out that the small impurity of benzene that exists in our tackifier solvent is less than the benzene levels in unleaded gasoline.

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TCE (TRICHLOROETHYLENE):

TCE is not and has not been used in pure form in our tire plants. Before the early 1970's, TCE was part (FYI: about 35 percent) in a general purpose cleaning solvent used to clean machine parts in our plants. The solvent containing the TCE was not used in cleaning applications such as floors because of its high cost. Since the early 1970's, plants have been using a cleaning solvent for machine parts containing TCA (trichlorethane) instead of TCE.

TCE also was the solvent in the cement used at one time in the final inspection area of the plant to apply balance pads to the inside surfaces of tires. The amount of cement was quite small and was applied inside ventilated booths to reduce greatly an employee's risk to exposure to any cement vapors.

ASBESTOS:

Firestone has been monitoring the use of asbestos in our tire plants since creation of the OSHA in 1970. Asbestos is not, of course, a raw material in our tires but has been used as an insulation material in tire building equipment used by most major manufacturers. OSHA has determined that properly contained asbestos is not a health hazard and the agency has inspected Firestone's plants literally dozens and dozens of times without finding asbestos problems.

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ASBESTOS: (cont.)

(IF PRESSED: Firestone is subjected to approximately 25 OSHA inspections every year and over the years we have received only one citation pertained to asbestos and that citation was amended after the company outlined its case. In the late 1970's, Firestone revised its plant engineering specifications to use substitutes for asbestos as an insulator in all tire plant equipment.)

The Firestone-URW health surveillance conducted jointly by the United Rubber Workers and Firestone never has shown that there is a risk from employee exposure to asbestos in Firestone tire plants.

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