

November 1992

IN RE: ABRAHAMIS

MMB-880333

to R&D Center
on 836-7272
on February 8, 1978
about ASBESTOS

R&D Center Safety Supervisors

cc: Research Division Managers
Heads of Tenant Organizations
Mr. J.L. Spicher
Dr. C.E. Arntzen
Mr. P. Norvill

I would like to reemphasize the Site policy that asbestos fiber-containing materials, whose form or use can be expected to result in airborne asbestos fibers, should be used only when suitable asbestos-free materials do not exist. Not only is implementing the requirement of the OSHA work standard on asbestos costly and difficult, but recent OSH Review Commission decisions on contested citations have upheld that any exposure of an employee to asbestos fiber, however low the level, requires a medical surveillance program on that employee. Where asbestos cloth, tape, etc., must be used, working with the material wet should be considered to minimize chances of creating airborne fibers in handling. Where asbestos must be used and fibers can be expected to become airborne, the Safety Administrator's office should be contacted to review the necessary steps that should be taken in the application.

The Headquarters Industrial Hygiene Laboratory has evaluated Refrasil, an amorphous silica textile produced by NITCO, as a replacement for asbestos cloth and blankets for applications such as welding screens and drop cloths and found it to be a satisfactory substitute (although more expensive). Refrasil can be used at up to 1800°F. The East Pittsburgh Works is one of the 4 locations using this material. Material No. 41514G has been assigned to Refrasil with Grade UC 100-06 blanket recommended for the welding screen/drop cloth application. If your organization uses asbestos cloth or blanket currently, you should consider replacing it with Refrasil. Purchasing is getting information on local distributors for the material.

A representative from the Industrial Products Division of Raybestos Manhattan, Inc. will be in on Thursday, February 9, to give us current information on RM's NOVATEX, which is an asbestos textile in which the fibers are said to be encapsulated in acrylic resin. This encapsulation is claimed to significantly reduce the airborne asbestos

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IN RE: ABRAMS November 1992

HUD-888334

- 2 -

fiber but does not eliminate it (or the medical surveillance requirement). If the asbestos is exposed to high temperatures (900° F), the acrylic burns off, leaving free asbestos and as big, if not worse, airborne problem as the conventional asbestos. The NOVATEX is available in cloth, tape, tubing, and protective clothing (gloves, etc.). Consideration is being given to possibly replacing the asbestos cloth and tape currently carried in the 401 Storeroom with NOVATEX and issuing the asbestos paper from the Safety Administrator's office for those applications where only asbestos paper can be used.

Edward S. Rober

Edward S. Rober, Manager
SAFETY & SECURITY

Edla / Rober
401-3X9

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