

CPSC:

CPSC Votes Tough New Carcinogen Rules

On June 1, the CPSC voted unanimously to establish formal procedures for screening, classifying, evaluating and regulating potential cancer-causing agents ... by its action, CPSC became the first independent federal agency to develop a formal carcinogen policy ... the Commission will use test results from the National Cancer Institute (NCI) or another, unspecified, laboratory ... with the new policy, the CPSC will take a more aggressive stance ... for example, under the new rules the Commission can take "precautionary action without establishing proof of a chemical's harm.

The New CPSC policy calls for categorizing all tested substances into one of four categories based on the strength of the evidence of carcinogenicity ... Category A, "potential carcinogens," would be banned outright ... Category B, "suspected carcinogens" and Category C, "questionable carcinogens" would be subject to continuing investigation and may be subject to warning labels or other immediate regulation depending on the danger posed ... Category D, "negative carcinogens," would require no action by the agency.

Barbara Franklin, one of the commissioners, termed the CPSC rules a "tough policy on the side of public health and safety" but said other factors would be taken into consideration "like economics, social aspects, and the like" in determining regulatory action.

CPSC Bans VCM in Self-Pressurized Containers

On May 30, the CPSC published in the Federal Register confirmation of its final order banning as of June 22, 1978, the use of any self-pressurized container containing vinyl chloride monomer (VCM) ... the final order which was issued March 24, 1978, classified VCM as a "banned hazardous substance" ... the order covers "self-pressurized products intended or suitable for household use manufactured or imported after October 7, 1974, that contain vinyl chloride monomer (VCM) as an ingredient or propellant."

USITC:

PVC Imports Likely to Hurt Domestic Industry

On April 12, the United States International Trade Commission (USITC), reported to the Secretary of the Treasury that the domestic industry is being or is likely to be injured by the importation of certain polyvinyl chloride (PVC) sheet and film from the Republic of China (Taiwan) ... the Commission's investigation began in January 1978 under section 201 of the Anti-Dumping Act of 1921 ... the complaint which led to the investigation was filed by counsel representing the Plastics Import Action Committee.

ON THE MEDIA FRONT

SPI Terms "New West" PVC Article "Inflammatory"

"The article 'The Great Saugus Cancer Scare' in the June 5 issue of New West not only contains serious errors of fact regarding polyvinyl chloride and vinyl chloride but by its

inflammatory language can produce fear and undue concern among the citizens of Sausalito and elsewhere. Edward J. Collins of the Society of the Plastics Industry (SPI) wrote to the editor of New West on June 16 ... the article, which included such irresponsible phrases as "(PVC) fumes wafting around its homes and schools" and "like someone leaving a high voltage wire lying unattended on the sidewalk," described "cancer-causing gas emissions from a nearby chemical plant" drifting into the schools and community of Sausalito, California.

The sentence "A little chaser shouldn't stand in the way of an industry accounting directly and indirectly for 700,000 jobs and one percent of the GNP," was the "most irresponsible" statements in the article, Mr. Collins said ... "it is grossly unfair to a responsible industry that brought this occupational health hazard to the attention of the government and the public and has spent literally millions of dollars in research and development to meet rigid governmental safety and health standards."

ON THE TECHNICAL FRONT

New Laser Sensor Can Monitor VC From Afar

A new light sensor that can identify and measure harmful gases from long distances has been developed by Stanford University engineers ... among the substances the "tunable" laser can monitor, according to its developer, Prof. Robert L. Byers, is vinyl chloride ... here's how it works: the laser sends out pulses of light at different wave lengths ... each type of gas has its own vibration frequency, like a fingerprint, at which it absorbs the light hitting it ... the atmosphere reflects the light back, like radar, and it is gathered by a 16-inch telescope and measured and analyzed by a computer ... since the laser beam can be timed it can be set to transmit at different frequencies to identify specific molecules ... the National Science Foundation has sponsored the Stanford laser project.

Background Papers on Vinyl Chloride Health Effects

Two new basic background papers on vinyl chloride health effects have been prepared by the SPI for members and other interested parties ... the first, "Vinyl Chloride and Birth Defects," deals with the issues of birth defects in communities adjacent to PVC plant and that of stillbirths and miscarriages among wives of PVC workers ... the second, "Vinyl Chloride and Community Safety," examines the question of vinyl chloride air emissions and the entire EPA situation ... three additional background papers -- on occupational health problems, the FDA situation and a general risk-benefit background -- are in preparation. Copies of the first two papers can be obtained from John Lawrence at SPI.
