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SPECIAL REPORT

TESTIMONY ON DIOXIN AND
SOFT-TISSUE CANCER

CONFIDENTIAL
SUBJECT TO PROTECTIVE ORDER.

TO:

Corporate Administrative Committee
Environmental Policy Staff and
Selected Network
Directors of Environmental Operations
Directors of Public Relations

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TESTIMONY ON DIOXIN AND SOFT-TISSUE CANCER

The alleged connection between dioxin and soft-tissue cancer is likely to be in the news again this week. On Thursday, July 28, several federal scientists, including Landrigan of NIOSH and Houk of CDC, will testify before Cong. James Scheuer's (D., NY) environmental subcommittee about a 40-fold increase in soft-tissue cancer among workers exposed to dioxin in the manufacture of 2,4,5-T, pentachlorophenol and other chemicals. Among these workers were Monsanto employees. This is the same story that made headlines six months ago, but this won't deter it from doing so again. Attached is Monsanto's position paper on the issue which disputes the certainty of a connection between dioxin and soft-tissue cancer.

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Monsanto Backgrounder

Dioxin & Soft Tissue Cancer

MONSANTO COMPANY / ST. LOUIS, MO.

July 15, 1983

A question has recently arisen regarding the possible causal relationship between dioxin and a very rare form of cancer known as "soft tissue sarcoma." This concern was first raised in 1979 by Swedish research on that country's forestry workers and again in 1982 by scientists at the U.S. National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH).

The Swedish work was subjected to a special review by the British Advisory Committee on Pesticides in late 1982. The Committee concluded that herbicides containing dioxin "do not pose a safety hazard, whether used in agriculture, forestry, the home and garden, or elsewhere." In addition, four other studies of workers similarly exposed in Finland, New Zealand, Washington state and the U.S. Air Force failed to find any evidence to support the Swedish work.

NIOSH's concern is apparently based on a review of the cause of death of two workers at a Dow Chemical Company plant in Midland, Michigan, two at Monsanto's plant in Nitro, W. Va., and of a father and son who worked at Monsanto's plant in Sauget, Ill. While NIOSH states that overall cancers were not present in excess in workers exposed to dioxin in these plants, the incidence of soft tissue cancer was unusually high. According to NIOSH, this is a very rare form of cancer, occurring in only .07 percent of the general population.

The fact is that five former Monsanto employees were found to have soft tissue cancer -- two at the Sauget plant and three at Nitro.

However, it is virtually certain that at least two of the five Monsanto cases had no exposure to dioxin.

In the first case, a worker at Monsanto's Nitro, W. Va., plant, held a clerical job for all but a few months during the time that 2,4,5-T herbicide was made at the plant. His few non-clerical months were spent as a maintenance worker, but it is highly unlikely that he was ever exposed to dioxin.

In the second case, the cancer was developed by both a father and son who worked at Monsanto's Sauget, Ill., plant. But the son worked at the plant for only two years and in an area of possible dioxin exposure for only one year. Because cancer generally develops over 20 to 30 years, there is no reason to believe that his cancer could have been work associated.

Dr. Raymond Suskind of the University of Cincinnati's Institute of Environmental Health has for the past several years studied the health of current and former workers at Monsanto's Nitro plant. He has said that the soft-tissue cancers cited among the Monsanto workers and one Dow Chemical Company employee are so different that they could not have had the same cause. His studies have shown no increased cancer rates from any cause among the Nitro workers.

We have been and will continue to cooperate with the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health in its effort to compile an international registry of workers who have been exposed to dioxin. This project may shed further light on the matter.

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