



Date July 14, 1975

INTEROFFICE
MEMORANDUM

Subject VC-PVC

To A. R. Adams

(Location, Organization, or Department)

From N. A. Vonneuman

(Location, Organization, or Department)

cc: Lo. Heider
R. H. Schenck

In accordance with your request, this is the translation of telex 24/6/1975 from Trade Union Heidelberg to Mr. Meuser. The original text which I received from you is returned enclosed.

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Protective measures against Vinylchloride (VC) - sickness.

Conference of the Trade Union of the Chemical Industry (TU) in Frankfurt.

The problems of the so called VC-sickness were discussed on 23/6/75 in Frankfurt at a conference. The TU invited the representatives of the nine PVC manufacturing plants (members of the executive, plant-consultants, plant-physicians, plant-managers), trade-inspectors, physicians, Federal Ministry for Labor & Social Order, trade union organizations and employer associations. The purpose was to brief the participants in full detail about the present status of knowledge and experience, and about arrangements to be made pursuant to the guidelines of the trade unions.

The conference disclosed that the industry exerted substantial efforts involving great investments for protective safety engineering, particularly for the automatic cleaning of pressure vessels, ventilation of work areas, and continuous monitoring of environmental air concentrations, as well as for the improvement of chemical process technology.

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On the basis of current information, it may be expected that these arrangements in plant management will offer effective protection.

The TU, as carrier of the statutory casualty insurance, reported in the chemical field 157 VC and PVC production workers in whom physicians suspected symptoms of the so called VC sickness. In 28% of the medically certified cases such connection between sickness and employment was not confirmed. In 30% of the cases reduction of earnings was below 20%. In 22% of the cases this reduction was between 20-40%, and in 20% of the cases 60% and over. The medically established symptoms involved primarily bleeding problems on hands (Raynaud syndrom), decrease of bloodcells (thrombozytopenie), as well as spleen and liver damage. Six cases of haemangiosarcoma of the liver, a very rarely occurring type of liver cancer, reported in the Federal Republic of Germany, had fatal outcome. So far 36 of these haemangiosarcoma cases were reported from abroad. It should be noted that none of the 65 cases of sickness reported from the PVC process industries resulted in establishment of proven connection with the so called VC sickness.

The TU initiated protective measures promptly upon the announcements of the first sicknesses, in close cooperation with the state and plant authorities, and on the basis of experiences gained in other countries issued "guidelines for protective measures for prevention of health hazards when handling VC" and trade union rules for medical preventive research for benefit of workers exposed to VC.

According to the guidelines, the environmental air conditions in plants must be continuously monitored, and work areas must be ventilated accordingly, so that employees would not be exposed to high VC concentration. Furthermore, special safety measures are required at the cleaning of autoclaves (polymerization pressure vessels). According to TU rules all employees in VC/PVC production plants will be examined regularly by plant physicians before starting their assignments, for their suitability and during their working hours for presence of health impairment.

Further conclusions about the so called VC sickness are expected from several research contracts and resulting

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projects abroad. The Central Institute for Labor Medicine in Hamburg has already prepared a study of domestic and foreign literature, within the scope of a research project sponsored by the Federal Labor Ministry. At the second stage, the VC input (e.g., autoclave air) will be analyzed. Under contract from the TU, the Institute for Toxicology and Pharmacology at Wuerzburg University will investigate the effect of VC and vinylidenchlorid in the organism. Another research contract of the TU is directed preventively towards the so far entirely open question whether VC can lead to modification of chromosomes.

By order of the State Nordrhein-Westfalen, the industry physician at Duesseldorf is engaged in determining on the basis of available data whether there was any connection with the so called VC sickness in the case of death of VC or PVC production workers.

Furthermore, the results of periodic examinations by plant physicians in PVC production plants will be reviewed for frequent occurrences of certain sickness symptoms.

Concerning financial consequences of the so called VC sickness, it was explicitly emphasized at the conference that notwithstanding contrary claims, health-, income- and casualty insurance adequately protected the financial position of the sick, or in case of death of their survivors, and will also so protect it in the future.



N. A. Vonneuman

NAV:lj

Enclosure

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