



Toxic Materials News

Weekly business newsletter published from the Nation's Capital

Publisher: LEONARD A. EISERER

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Vol. 6 No. 33

August 15, 1979

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SLANTS & TRENDS

A "FAIRLY SUBSTANTIAL PERCENTAGE OF PRODUCTS" containing asbestos will be the subject of an advanced notice of proposed rulemaking (ANPR) being developed by EPA as an initial step in its effort to regulate asbestos outside school buildings. The ANPR will seek discussion not only of risks from exposure during actual use of products containing asbestos, but also on risks incurred during mining, milling and manufacturing, an EPA official has told TMN. The agency has termed this the "life-cycle" approach to evaluating asbestos hazards, and hopes to use it in obtaining an unreasonable risk determination on all products listed in the ANPR, thereby avoiding the burdensome process of having to prove that unreasonable risks exist for each individual product. The ANPR is expected to be issued sometime in October.

AN ANPR ON THE SCHOOL ASBESTOS PROGRAM was released Aug. 14 by EPA, and will be published in early September. This document announces the development of regulations requiring the inspection of schools for materials containing asbestos, the correction of situations where obvious deterioration of asbestos-containing materials has occurred, and periodic monitoring. Eight factors for consideration in assessing the extent of hazard are included.

* * *

AN INTERAGENCY ADVISORY GROUP'S RECOMMENDATIONS for improving Federal regulation of toxic substances (see story on page 259) was not well received by industry. Tatiana Roodkowsky of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce suggested that recommended restrictions on the protection of confidential business information "could hinder innovation and growth." She pointed out that "great strides have been made in protecting human health and the environment," yet current laws recognize the need for the chemical industry to expand. The report of the Toxic Substances Strategy Committee is a "hodge-podge" of concepts and recommendations that have either been disputed or discredited since the committee was created in 1977, according to a statement from the Chemical Manufacturers Association.

Published weekly by Business Publishers, Inc. Editorial and business offices: P.O. Box 1067, Silver Spring, MD 20910, 301-587-6300. Subscription price \$175 per year, \$90 for six months, U.S., Canada and Mexico; \$210 per year in all other countries (includes Air Mail delivery). Multiple copy rates on request to Henry Kleiner, Jr., Business Manager. Printed in U.S.A.

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SCF-ALLF-07810

HFM - 004031

SLANTS & TRENDS (Cont.)

TOO MUCH CHEMICAL TESTING has been designed to give chemicals "a clean bill of health and not to detect lesions." OSHA director Eula Bingham told a public meeting on the National Toxicology Program Aug. 10 (see story on page 261). Bingham said she hoped NTP would raise the consciousness of the scientific community concerning the need to improve test methods to detect chemical injuries.

* * *

EPA TO SEEK COMMENTS ON REIMBURSEMENT FOR TEST DATA

An advanced notice of proposed rulemaking that seeks comments on how EPA should handle the problem of reimbursement of firms that provide data to meet a Section 4 test rule requirement is going through the agency's review process and should be published within a month or two. Under the Toxic Substances Control Act, if a firm is doing testing required for an existing chemical, other firms can seek exemptions on the grounds that the testing is already being done. The exempt firms must then reimburse the testing firm. If firms cannot reach agreement on reimbursement, they will turn to EPA to resolve the matter.

In its draft ANPR, EPA is considering three alternative approaches by which it could determine the amount of reimbursement due the testing firm. The first approach calls for case-by-case determination of money owed on the basis of allowable testing costs and an exempt firm's market share and competitive position, with no set definition of those three terms. The second approach would establish a formula-like rule that defines the three terms and says how much weight should be assigned to each one in determining reimbursement. The third approach would define the terms but not provide the weight given to each.

According to EPA the second and third approaches would be easier to implement, requiring less time and expenditure of resources, but they would be less flexible. They would also encourage direct settlements since firms would know how EPA is likely to set the reimbursement.

Other questions to be resolved and on which EPA will seek comments are: how to protect confidential information such as market share or even that a firm produces a certain chemical; when to set reimbursement so that a testing firm does not have to wait years for its money yet avoid continually recomputing a firm's share of test costs as new companies enter the market; whether or not to reimburse several firms which conduct similar tests;

Whether the market share should be based on sales or production and the period of time for which market share is measured; the definition of competitive position; whether allowable costs should include actual test costs or the standard cost of type testing conducted; the type of administrative proceedings to be used when EPA is called in (the agency currently favors an expert panel); and to what extent firms expect to collaborate on testing.

* * *

EPA RESPONDS TO CMA PETITION FOR PROCEDURAL CHANGES IN TSCA RULEMAKING

Environmental Protection Agency has given a mixed response to a request by the Chemical Manufacturers Association for changes in the manner in which the agency develops and handles rulemaking under the Toxic Substances Control Act.

In a recent petition, CMA asked EPA to better coordinate its work so as to avoid overlapping proposals. The same people in industry handle several issues and find it difficult to respond to several at one time, CMA pointed out. Responding to CMA, Assistant Administrator Steven Jellinek noted that EPA has many TSCA provisions to put into effect and "if EPA were to implement these provisions one at a time, it would be many years before TSCA would be fully implemented." But Jellinek conceded that a problem exists, and for this reason said that the agency is trying to keep interested persons fully advised of agency thinking prior to proposing rules in order to insure that material reviewed during the comment period is not entirely new.

Jellinek rejected a CMA request that all public meetings on proposed rules be held after the close of the comment period. He suggested instead that the timing of meetings be made on a case-by-case basis, since some rules are amenable to delayed meetings, while others necessitate swift action and delays in public meetings would not be in the public interest.

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