

JUN 20 1974 *By Hill*

# OSHA Issues Temporary Guides on Vinyl Chloride

WASHINGTON (FNS) — The Labor Department Wednesday issued stringent inspection guidelines for plants using vinyl chloride as the plastics industry, in a scathing attack, assailed the agency's proposed new health rules covering the chemical.

The Society of the Plastics Industry charged the new regulations proffered by the department's Occupational Safety & Health Administration to offset carcinogenic dangers could throw 1.6 million employees out of work and cost \$65 billion in lost sales and production.

OSHA's proposed new standard, which would cut the air content of vinyl chloride in plants to a "no detectable level," is "infeasible to achieve, even with the highly sophisticated methods of in-plant control that have been developed by the industry," SPI insisted.

The new standard will be the subject of hearings starting Tuesday and many other user industries are expected to echo SPI's warnings that "The vinyl chloride and polyvinyl chloride resin-producing industries will be forced to close down immediately," if the standard is adopted. Nearly 80 organizations already have said they will testify.

Meanwhile, OSHA's inspection "guidelines" are for the temporary standard, issued April 5, which limits permissible employee exposure to 50 parts of the chemical per million parts of air.

Under these new guidelines, which are really regulations, only qualified Federal or State industrial hygienists will be allowed to conduct workplace inspections. Retroactively to April 22, inspectors finding firms that have not monitored the atmosphere will issue them a citation — and in most cases "the alleged violation will be classed as serious," OSHA said.

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## Hearings under way on vinyl chloride rules

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration opened public hearings last week on the agency's proposed permanent standard to reduce worker exposure to vinyl chloride to a "no detectable level." The hearings promise to be long and acrimonious. There are 89 scheduled panels of witnesses, and questioning is permitted.

A lead-off witness for the Society of the Plastics Industry, Anton Vittone, president of B. F. Goodrich Chemical, argued that there are "no data showing that exposure levels as provided under the emergency standard [50 p.p.m.] are not

safe and of a low degree of risk." He said that "the proposed permanent standard is not technologically feasible and, if adopted, would shut down the industry." SPI estimates that this could result in the loss of 1.7 million to 2.2 million jobs and a loss of domestic production value of \$65 million to \$90 million annually.

In place of OSHA's proposed permanent standard, Mr. Vittone proposes a stepped reduction for worker exposure in polyvinyl chloride resin plants that would lower the ceiling to 40 p.p.m. this year and to 25 p.p.m. by late 1976. His proposed standards for monomer plants are a ceiling exposure of 25 p.p.m. for 1974 and of 10 p.p.m. for late 1975.

However, United Rubber Workers president Peter Bommarito told the hearing that the "Government's goal of 'no detectable level' for vinyl chloride is both necessary and feasible." Characterizing the indus-

try prediction of economic doom as blackmail, Mr. Bommarito contends that although some of the older plants might have difficulty justifying major alterations, "newer plants have a different problem characterized by the will, not the ability, to do the job." The labor position drew support from a draft environmental impact statement prepared by the Department of Labor, which concludes that "no evidence to date indicates that promulgation of the proposed standard will stop vinyl production and use."

What effect testimony at the hearing will have on OSHA's final permanent standard remains to be seen. But Daniel P. Boyd, director of the office of standards development for OSHA, said that in preparing the final standard, which must be set by Oct. 5, OSHA would consider the availability and cost of appropriate technology.