

The Wizards of Oops!

All those who believe we have our environmental problems under control, raise your hands. Those with your hands up, please answer the following questions: What kind of detergent should we be using? Can we eat tuna fish without qualms? Is Lake Erie dead or alive? Do we continue to use DDT in our gardens, or not?

Somehow, the on-again-off-again juggling act that has characterized some of our environmental efforts allows the impression to get abroad that we may not know what we're talking about. Any action taken to limit an environmental hazard must include three steps: (1) Measure how much of the dangerous material is in the air, or water, or soil, or whatever. (2) Measure how much is a threat to human welfare, or crops, or wildlife, or whatever. (3) Decide how much will be permitted. Each step is fraught with science and politics, the road is dotted with pitfalls, and the alluring shortcut can lead to strange territory.

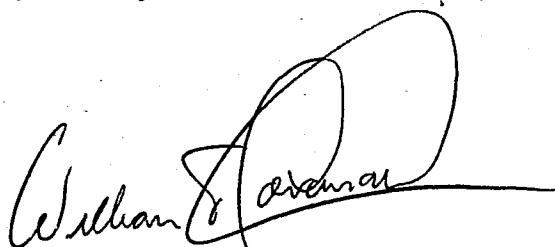
ASTM feels no responsibility whatever for Step 3—that is primarily a political decision. We have had thus far very little involvement with Step 2—that is primarily a medical, or at least a biological, problem. Step 1—measurement of the amount of questionable material in the environment—is our bag. Therefore it should be a matter of great concern to us that the credibility gap in the area of test methods seems to be as large as any other.

A recent newspaper article ("Scientific Tests: Can They Be Believed?") appearing in the *San Francisco Examiner* makes the point. Wondering about the accuracy of such tests, the newspaper hired three laboratories to make identical measurements and compare results. The laboratories measured the amounts of DDT, DDE, mercury, and lead in soil samples taken from an apricot orchard near San Francisco. The results, in parts per million, were reported as follows:

	DDT	DDE	Mercury	Lead
Laboratory 1	0.80	2.80	0.80	3.30
Laboratory 2	0.68	1.20	0.10	21
Laboratory 3	0.14	0.47	0.10	50

These results are obviously unacceptable. They raise two immediate questions: (1) What went wrong? (2) Are these typical of the kinds of sampling and measurements that underlie the banning of fish from grocers' shelves, or the shutting down of industrial operations?

To ASTM, one conclusion is strong and clear: Wherever an ASTM test method is used for such measurements, we are responsible to see that it is the best method we can develop, and that the precision and accuracy of the method are known. In the field of air pollution, Project Threshold was launched with precisely that objective in mind. How many more Thresholds are needed?



WILLIAM T. CAVANAUGH,
MANAGING DIRECTOR

Technical Committee 45, on Rubber and Rubber Products, of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) culminated its most productive year with its plenary meeting at ASTM Headquarters in Philadelphia in early October.

According to Dr. Robert D. Stiehler, of the National Bureau of Standards, who leads the U.S. delegation, the nineteenth plenary meeting capped the committee's most successful and productive year with 134 representatives attending, 96 of whom were from countries other than the United States. Additionally, the meeting attracted observers from two countries which had never before sent them: Indonesia and Mexico.

Since the 1970 meeting, the Committee on Rubber and Rubber Products has issued 43 ISO recommendations, and one revision and one amendment of existing recommendations.

During the Philadelphia meeting the members approved 20 additional documents to be submitted to the ISO Council for adoption as ISO Standards. After pointing out that another 23 documents are already awaiting issuance, Dr. Stiehler predicted that all 43 should become ISO Standards during the coming year.

Including the ISO recommendations previously issued, the Committee on Rubber and Rubber Products has completed work on 118 separate documents, plus nine revisions and amendments.

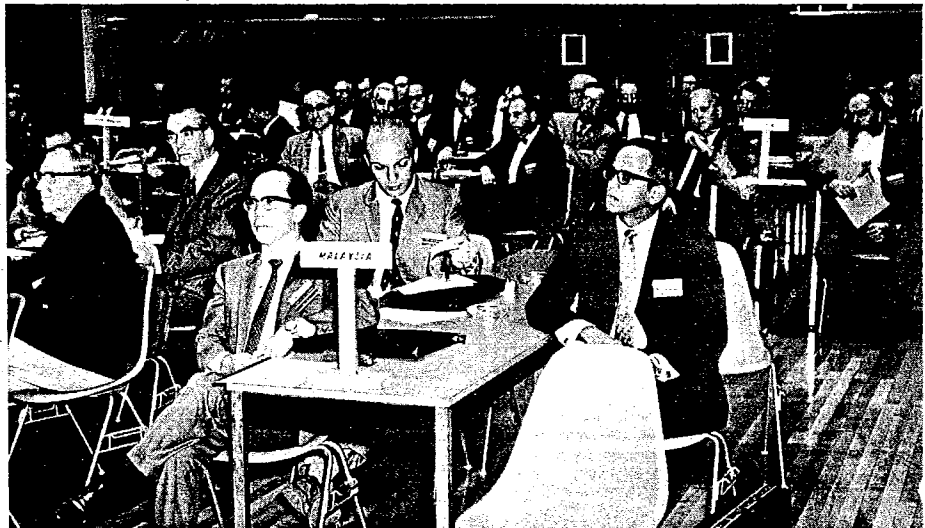
Two new working groups were approved by the ISO members during the Philadelphia meeting. One was formed from the task group on fabrics coated with rubber and plastics of Working Group II. The other will target on the action of flame on rubber and rubber products and will be organized during 1972. The convenorship of the working group on flexible cellular



Members of Technical Committee 45, of the International Organization for Standardization, consider documents on Rubber and Rubber Products during that organization's plenary meeting in Philadelphia during October. They are (from right) W. H. King, Vice-Chairman of ASTM Committee D-11; R. D. Stiehler, leader of the U.S. Delegation to ISO/TC 45; three members of the delegation from the United Kingdom; and in the foreground (from left) an interpreter; the chairman of the working group and another German delegate.

ISO/TC 45 on Rubber

October Meeting Highlights



Members of the Malaysian delegation to the International Organization for Standardization, Technical Committee 45 on Rubber and Rubber Products, listen to a speaker at ASTM Headquarters where ISO met for its 19th plenary meeting during October. Some 134 representatives from 16 countries attended the meeting, capping ISO/TC 45's best year.

materials was transferred from Germany to the United Kingdom.

Delegates and observers from 16 of the 25 participating countries sent representatives to the 19th plenary sessions. The countries represented were Austria, Belgium, Canada, Czechoslovakia, France, Germany, India, Italy, Malaysia, Netherlands, Poland, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, and the United States of America.

The Association Internationale des Constructeurs de Material Aerospacial, the International Institute of Synthetic Rubber Products and the International Rubber Research and Development Board also sent observers to the meeting.

Dr. Stiehler observed that the standard documents developed in ISO/TC 45 are beginning to have a noticeable impact on international trade in rubber and rubber products. Although the committee was formed in 1948, there have simply not been enough working standards available for the international industrial community to guide itself until now, he said.

These first 20 years were just a prologue to what the committee is beginning to accomplish now, according to Dr. Stiehler. The recommendations drawn up by the

ISO committee on rubber and rubber products, as in ISO as a whole, are starting to play on a world-wide scale the same role ASTM Standards play in the United States.

To increase the rate at which ISO documents may be produced for the international market, ISO has modified its requirements for establishing Standards. Previously, a single dissenting member nation could prevent the adoption of an ISO recommendation as a Standard, and therefore no one attempted to make the effort necessary to have the recommendations voted upon. From the inception of the technical committee on rubber and rubber products in 1948, not one recommendation became a Standard.

However, in 1971 the International Organization for Standardization changed the requirement for a Standard from unanimous approval of its membership, to approval by 75 percent of the membership. As a result, some 43 recommendations written by TC 45 are being converted to ISO Standards in the coming year.

Although most of the activities of the committee on rubber and rubber products concerns the development of standard test methods, in the last year several materials

(continued on page 48)