

Memorandum

TO: Plant File

DATE: July 13, 1949

FROM: Paul D. Halley, Industrial Hygienist
Acting Director

RE: Conference with U. M. W. District #50 representatives and union representatives from Monsanto Chemical Company, Nitro, West Virginia regarding outbreak of chloracne at this plant.

On July 8, 1949, Mr. Michael Widman, local representative of U. M. W. District #50 called at the office together with several employees of the Monsanto Chemical Company, Nitro, West Virginia.

They reported that on March 8, 1949, a process at this plant got out of control and blew up. This resulted in the operators being showered with the material in the autoclave plus exposure to additional persons engaged in the cleaning up and investigating of the explosion.

Approximately a week after this happened the men became afflicted with chloracne on the face particularly, with some being affected on the entire body. In one case the employee apparently carried the material home on his clothing, thereby exposing his child to the same material with resulting chloracne. In all, 40 persons have had varying degrees of chloracne. The men were examined by Dr. Nelson, the plant physician and later sent to Dr. Hunter Boggs in Charleston for treatment. In addition, Dr. Louis Schwartz, Dermatologist formerly of the U. S. P. H. S. was called in for consultation by the company and diagnosed the affliction as chloracne and prescribed treatment which consisted of opening and cleaning the pustules twice weekly.

With the onset of hot weather this condition has been aggravated somewhat. The question was raised by Mr. Widman as to whether the employees were being re-exposed daily or whether their entire trouble was due to the original exposure. He stated that the employees were forced to go back into the contaminated area and that on in the past few days has the company taken any definite steps to decontaminate the area and paint the building and equipment with aluminum paint. Decontamination consisted of steaming, washing with sodium hypochloride solution and mechanical removal of the material.

He requested that the State Health Department investigate to determine whether or not it was safe for the workers to go back into this area as they did not feel that the men should be exposed again to such material.

Mr. Michael Widman, 420 Morison Building, Charleston W. Va., Phone 21-025.

Note—Called Mr. Widman July 13, 1949 and he reports that operators in adjoining part of building are also affected and that they had no part in clean-up work and exposure must be air borne.

By PDH
Paul D. Halley, Industrial Hygienist
Acting Director

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