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## Goodrich firm probes three cancer deaths

The cancer deaths of three B. F. Goodrich Co. employees may have been related to their work with vinyl or polyvinyl chloride at the company's plant on Bell Lane, the company has acknowledged.

A company spokesman in Akron, Ohio, said yesterday that the firm began investigating the possibility that chemicals used in some of the local plant's operations might be carcinogens — cancer-producing agents — after the December death of a Goodrich employee.

The man died of cancer, and like two other B. F. Goodrich employees who died last March and in September 1971, he worked in the production of polyvinyl chloride resins and compounds.

Once the third death occurred, the company spokesman said, Goodrich officials went over medical records of other employees and turned up the two additional deaths.

The information on the deaths has been passed on to the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health, and the Kentucky Department of Labor, which recently passed stringent new regulations requiring the registration of all known carcinogens used by industry in the state.

The Goodrich spokesman said vinyl and polyvinyl chloride had not been registered as a carcinogen with the Department of Labor because "this is the first time there's ever been any indication that it might be a cancer-producing agent."

The three men, whose names were not disclosed by the company, were part of some 270 of the Louisville plant's 1,200 employees who work in vinyl chloride operations here.

As a result of the investigation, Goodrich has said it will offer medical examinations to all employees involved in any phase of the vinyl chloride or polyvinyl chloride operations, and has begun a re-

view of all available medical records of former employees or retired employees who have died recently.

After the December death, the company hired a Berkeley, Calif., consulting firm, Tabershaw-Cooper Associates, Inc., to investigate the cases and the firm's methods of handling vinyl chloride.

In a prepared statement released yesterday, the company said it has been conducting programs to reduce the exposure of its employees to chemical hydrocarbons, especially vinyl chloride. The statement said all the company's plants have been operating at exposure levels "well below those prescribed by federal government standards."

Exposure to the chemical is generally in the form of vapors released at either room temperature or slightly below room temperature, the company said. A complete check of all pipes, valves and similar equipment where leaks might develop has been conducted, the spokesman said.

The three men reportedly died of angiosarcoma, a tumor of highly packed blood cells containing many small blood vessels, and usually highly malignant.

The Goodrich spokesman said yesterday that "although there is no proof of the cause of death" in the three cases, the company is "going to reimburse the employee's claims under Kentucky's workmen's compensation laws."

The National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health and the Kentucky Department of Labor will begin studying the information provided by Goodrich to determine if vinyl and polyvinyl chloride are cancer-producing agents.

Dr. J. Bradford Block, medical consultant to the state labor department, had already begun investigating the three cases yesterday, according to his office, and was not available for comment.

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