

NIOSH Safety Routine Set Up at PVC Facility

B. F. Goodrich says it is reviewing precautionary monitoring and control procedures recommended by National Institute of Occupational Safety & Health (NIOSH) for the firm's polyvinyl chloride operations in Louisville, Ky.

The company notes it already has in effect safety procedures in all its PVC and vinyl chloride operations that have reduced exposure levels for employees to one-tenth of present government safety standards.

The NIOSH recommendations, mailed to the company's Akron, Ohio, headquarters on January 31, result from a survey of the Louisville PVC operations on January 24 by medical and other professional representatives of NIOSH, the Federal government's Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA) and the Kentucky Department of Labor.

The company says its review of the NIOSH recommendations indicate that "a majority of the suggested procedures are already in effect or being implemented.

Several others require evaluating and ordering additional equipment and plant installation activities. Some of the suggested procedures necessitate further review and clarification with NIOSH."

In this regard, Goodrich quotes NIOSH as offering its staff assistance "in instituting the recommended monitoring and control procedures by providing technical assistance and training."

The recommendations divide into five broad categories of "preliminary work practices" all applying to PVC operations. These concern general housekeeping procedures; protective clothing for employees directly involved in PVC operations; showers for PVC employees after work turns; monitoring of plant and personnel, and respiratory protection for designated employees in certain vinyl chloride and PVC operations.

Management of the Louisville plant has informed employees of the NIOSH recommendations and is also preparing to mail to all employee homes the full text of the NIOSH recommendations and a special company summary and progress report.

The NIOSH recommendations were sent to the company with a covering letter from Dr. Marcus M. Key, director of the agency and assistant surgeon general of the US.

Meanwhile, Department of Labor is scheduled to hold a hearing Friday (February 15) on plant safety problems affecting vinyl chloride and PVC. Exposure to the chemicals may be implicated in three deaths from cancer reported at the Louisville plant (CMB, 2/1/74, p. 4).

In connection with the cancer scare, Manufacturing Chemists Association said last week that it has stopped circulation of a chemical safety publication on vinyl chloride - Data Sheet SD-56.

MCA notes that it is directing a group of vinyl monomer and PVC producers in a series of animal exposure studies and an epidemiological study of industry workers.

Uncompleted as yet, these studies were initiated because of reports from Italy by Dr. P. L. Viola that long-term, massive exposures of rats to vinyl chloride vapors had produced malignant tumors of a kind not found in man.

In its 1972 revision of the data sheet, MCA called attention to the reports, but added that carcinogenicity to humans had not been observed. The Goodrich experience "now questions the validity of the latter statement," Goodrich says.

A revised edition of the vinyl chloride data sheet is planned after this question has been resolved.

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