PLAINTIFF'S EXHIBIT
CAP-1494

A/C Pipe
Producers Association

Internal Correspondence

Public Affairs Committee

TO. J. F. Welch

FROM J. F. Welch, Vice President

DATE November 12, 1981

SUBJECT: Field Problem - Baytown, Texas

ACTION REQUIRED: Review for information

At the October 13, 1981 meeting of the Public Affairs Committee, Hal Olson (J-M) circulated a news article (enclosed) in which Lee McCabe of the EPA Health Effects Research Laboratory (HERL) is quoted as stating:

> If the utility doesn't know they have to worry about it (asbestos fibers in drinking water conveyed through A/C pipe), then you have a problem.

Concerns were expressed about the timing of McCabe's statement, that is, whether it was made after receipt of the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) response to AACPP's letter about inappropriate public statements by HERL researchers.

The news article was published on June 28, 1981. AACPP received a response to its letter on August 5, 1981 so it is unlikely that EPA took corrective action by the date of publication. Thus, it does not appear to be appropriate to bring the Baytown matter to the attention of EPA on the grounds that McCabe ignored whatever "warnings" were given to him by EPA-Washington.

As an aside, a water utility official and a consulting engineer for the Baytown Area Water Authority met with Staff during the Texas-Southwest Section, American Water Works Association on November 10, 1981. They stated that the problem appeared to have run its short course, but they were interested in having access to the "A/C Pipe and Drinking Water" audio-visual presentation. Frank Duffy (Certain-teed Corporation) agreed to take care of this matter.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call.

JFW/ajb

Enclosure

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Officials Divided Over Safety Of City Water Pipes

Most Lines Made Of Cement-Asbestos

By TIM POTTER

A federal official claims concrete-asbestos water pipes that carry much of the drinking water in Baytown pose possible health hazards.

An official with the federal Environmental Protection Agency in Cincinnati, Ohio, says officials in charge of the Baytown Area Water Authority should check the city's drinking water to determine if it contains asbestos fibers.

Baytown City Engineer-Public Works Director Norman Dykes says the asbestos pipes are used in the city's main water lines and in most subdivisions.

Dykes says Baytown, like cities throughout the nation, uses the asbestos pipe because it is relatively cheap and is very durable.

He says the pipe, a mixture of concrete and asbestos fibers, has "always been an old stand-by."

But Leland McCabe, a director of the EPA Health Effects Researrch Laboratory in Cincinnati, says the pipe is potentially dangerous. "If the utility doesn't know they have to worry about it (asbestos fibers), then you have a problem."

According to Allen Gammage, the laboratory supervisor of the Baytown Area Water Authority plant, lab technicians have never measured the water for asbestos since the surface water treatment plant began operating about three months ago.

Gammage claims that sampling the water for asbestos is impractical and unneccessary.

But the EPA's McCabe says asbestos fibers in the drinking water pose a health risk.

McCabe has authored studies to determine whether asoestos water pipes may be responsible for such problems as cancer.

Scientists have proved that inhaling asbestos causes lung cancer, but no study has ever shown that asbestos in drinking water leads to cancer.

Although McCabe concedes there is no solid evidence that shows swallowing asbestos is harmful, he says some studies have suggested that it causes gastrointestinal cancer.

"I'm taking the stance that it's just not good to be drinking fibers," he says.

But state water official Charles Mattox in Austin says people like McCabe are unduly alarmed.

"We know about asbestos being in the drinking water," says Maddox, chief of data reports for the Water Quality Branch of the State Department of Health.

"If it is a possible hazard, it hasn't been demonstrated to us.

"If we need to take steps to eliminate asbestos as a public health hazard, then we will do it. But we don't see it as a hazard at this time."

Mattox says the American Water Works Association, which sets standards for water quality, has always endorsed the use of asbestos pipe.

Although the state routinely takes water samples from cities to test it for bacteria, Mattox says the state health department has never tested for asbestos content.

But he says the state lab in Austin has plans to buy an electron microscope for about $150,000 to $200,000 to begin measuring for asbestos fibers.

Local water treatment plants like the one in Baytown cannot afford to buy such expensive equipment, Mattox says.

Gammage, who is in charge of testing water at the Baytown plant, says only water that is high in pH or acidity would cause asbestos fibers to be in the drinking water.

According to EPA engineers, acidic water tends to dissolve concrete in the pipes, causing asbestos fibers to fall into the water.

Gammage claims water in Baytown is only slightly acidic, meaning it will not cause corrosion in pipes. The city buys its water from BAWA which pumps Trinity River water into its plant from an adjacent canal.

The BAWA lab currently has no test to determine the amount of asbestos fibers in the water, Gammage says, because the tests are not necessary.

Basically, the lab runs tests to look for bacteria in the water.

Gammage says he and other technicians add certain doses of chemicals to purify the water.

Although he says asbestos water pipes have been used nationally since the 1920s without any complaints, he agrees that asbestos should be studied.

"I don't want anything to happen to me either."

But Gammage and other officials associated with the BAWA plant claim the EPA is impractical when it asks local treatment plants to measure asbestos.

Gammage says the EPA has the "tendency to get people upset over nothing.

"I don't anticipate any problem with the pipe we're using."

But EPA's McCabe says local officials should not be so confident. At the least, he says they should take routine tests to determine the amount of minute asbestos fibers in the water.

Every time there is a break in one of the asbestos pipes, the chips should be removed from the water line, McCabe says.

Also, he recommends that the city workers be required to remove any asbestos dust or fragments caused from cutting the pipe.

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