

From the Desk of:

SUSAN G. AUSTIN, Sc. D.
CORPORATE EPIDEMIOLOGIST
212-551-6998

5/18

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article file*

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High tumor rate seen in petrochemical plants

By Victor Cohn
and Joanne Omang
Washington Post Service

WASHINGTON — A high incidence of brain cancer has been discovered in two Texas petrochemical plants, and federal officials fear they may find brain cancers among workers elsewhere in the huge industry that makes chemicals from oil.

In an investigation initiated in early 1979, 25 brain tumor cases — 24 of them fatal so far — have been discovered among recent and former workers at a Dow Chemical Co. plant in Freeport, Tex. Eighteen more fatal cases turned up at a Union Carbide plant in Texas City, Tex.

Both plants are in the Houston-

Galveston area, which is home to a number of plants that make or process petrochemicals. So far, federal investigators have not been able to pinpoint the responsible chemical — or, more likely, a group of chemicals or a process — although there are several under suspicion.

The brain cancer incidence among workers in the plants in the past 24 years is twice the level considered normal for the rest of the population. Dr. Richard Waxweiler of the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) said yesterday. All the victims are men; few women work in the plants.

Investigators from the two federal agencies involved — the Labor Department's Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and the Department of Health and Human Services' NIOSH — have not yet been able to look in detail at other plants, although they have started some investigations.

They have reports, they said, of possible concentrations of similar brain cancers in plants at Beaumont and Port Arthur, Tex.; Charleston, W. Va.; Louisville and San Francisco, and at one plant in Canada.

"There's no reason to suspect all petrochemical plants," Waxweiler said. But Dr. Victor Alexander of OSHA said there may be "five or six others," at least, and J. William Lloyd, an OSHA epidemiologist, said: "There may be any number of chemical plants involved."

Petrochemicals, made partly from oil, include hundreds of products such as antifreeze, chlorine, latex, ethylene and vinyl chloride.

Spokesmen for both companies noted that the results of testing so far are inconclusive. "We see no common thread that would suggest (that) exposure to any particular material or location in the plant" is involved, said James Hansen of Dow. "There is nothing so far to connect the workplace to the brain cancer."

Damon Engle, manager of Union Carbide's Texas City plant, agreed that the incidence of brain cancer among petrochemical workers may be higher than the national average but said that it has not yet been proved to be higher than the incidence in the geographic area. "If it is, we're just as anxious as anybody to get to the bottom of it," he said.

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AUG 4 1980

J. BOROS

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Inquirer, twice!*

Panel recommends labeling Sevin as possibly dangerous

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However, the panel also said existing evidence indicated that Sevin was less dangerous to human health than many other pesticides.

The panel stressed that more information on its effects on cell structures and fetal development was needed before any conclusions could be drawn. The panel, made up of scientists recommended by the National Science Foundation and the National Institute of Health, advises the EPA on scientific matters relating to pesticides.

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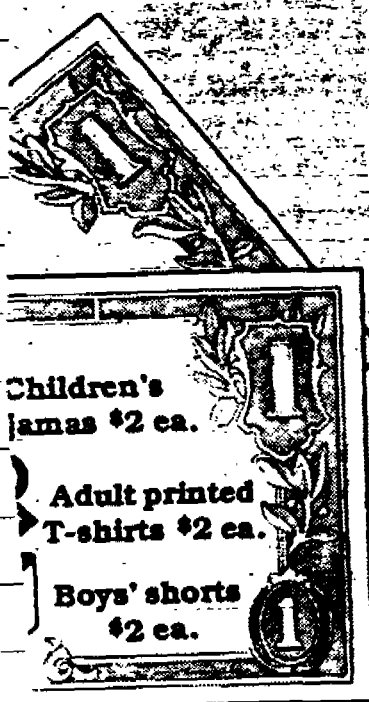
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A. A. PUECH



CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT
270 PARK AVENUE, NEW YORK, N. Y. 10017

Date: 10/30/80

To: Dr. Michael Utidjian

From: Anne D. Haughton

FYI X

Comment _____

Action _____

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054018

DAVID H. GLENN. M.D.

MEDICAL DIRECTOR

GULF COAST AREA

UNION CARBIDE CORPORATION

PHONE 948-5582

P.O. BOX 471

TEXAS CITY, TEXAS

77580

October 21, 1980

Dear Carbider,

For the past year and one-half Union Carbide management has periodically updated you via Forecaster articles and letters to your home on the progress of the epidemiology study that has been underway at the Texas City Plant. The purpose of my letter is again to update you on some developments in this area.

Next week, at a cancer symposium to be held by the New York Academy of Sciences, OSHA will present a paper on the Texas City Epidemiology Study and NIOSH will give their preliminary conclusions of the Case Control Study.

Dr. Vic Alexander (OSHA) is expected to give a historical chronology on how they became involved, the initiation of the study and the methods used in case identification.

Dr. Sanford Leffingwell (NIOSH) has given me a draft of his presentation. He makes two statements of considerable interest to us:

"So far in the course of this investigation, no convincing association has been found between any historical exposure and the development of brain tumors at this plant."

He concludes his paper by stating:

"Finally we must ask whether we are really seeing an effect of occupation. The excess of observed over expected reported earlier, combined with an apparent excess when compared to local rates could be the result of chance."

We are continuing to work locally on refining departmental and job codes and developing a computer program to make it easier to work with the data. When this task is completed, Dr. Susan Austin, our Corporate Epidemiologist, plans to do an in-house study to parallel NIOSH's Case Control Study.

The latest prediction for completion of the full study by NIOSH is January 1, 1981.

Sincerely,



David H. Glenn, M.D.

Medical Director, Texas Gulf Coast Area

DHG/lb

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TEXAS CITY, TEXAS

Forecaster

VOL. 40, NO. 42

OCTOBER 29, 1980

Absentee Voting

ends Friday,

Oct. 31-5 p.m.

Friday, October 31st, at 5 pm is the deadline for absentee voting. If you think you are going to be out of town, or cannot meet the 7 am to 7 pm deadline for voting on Tuesday, November 4, you'd better make plans to vote absentee at one of the official county designated courthouses or annexes in the county in which you live.

**Everyone
is voting
this
season...
how about
you?**



To find out who the WITCH is, turn to Page 2.

What's Going On ?

by RON RITCHIE

Employee Relations Manager

The press, radio, and television, starting Monday evening and into Tuesday, have been carrying reports about the epidemiology study currently under way at the Texas City Plant. Dr. Victor Alexander of OSHA was quoted by several newspapers as saying that in his opinion there is evidence that the brain tumor deaths observed here were occupationally related.

Medical personnel at Union Carbide were surprised by Dr. Alexander's statements since there has been no scientific evidence reported to us which

supports his allegation. In fact, NIOSH, the agency which is actually conducting the study, has told us that there has been no convincing association found between worker exposures and the development of brain tumors.

If you are confused at this point . . . so are we. As additional data is developed we will continue, as we have done since the study started, to keep you informed.

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