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Rare Liver Cancer Deemed 'Job Disease'

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (UPI) — An official of the Kentucky Occupational Safety and Health Administration reports that the federal government has declared a rare liver cancer which has taken the lives of four Louisville B. F. Goodrich Co. employees as a new occupational disease.

"Right now, the only four known cases of this disease are right here in Louisville, but this thing has tremendous implications nationally and internationally," said Dr. J. Bradford Block, medical consultant for the Kentucky Occupational Safety and Health Administration.

Block said the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health made the decision to label angiosarcoma as an occupational disease during an all-day meeting in Washington Friday.

Block said two prominent pathologists from the National Institutes of Health and the National Cancer Institute confirmed that angiosarcoma, the liver cancer, took the lives of four employees who worked in the polyvinyl chloride process at the Goodrich plant here.

He added that 13 plants across the nation manufacture vinyl chloride and another 15

use it in such a way as to expose their employees to it. He said authorities estimate that as many as 6,500 workers have been exposed to vinyl chloride throughout the United States.

Block said national health officials are placing special emphasis on results expected next week of further testing of 55 workers in the Louisville Goodrich plant, whose previous blood tests showed abnormalities. They were among 271 employees tested at the plant.

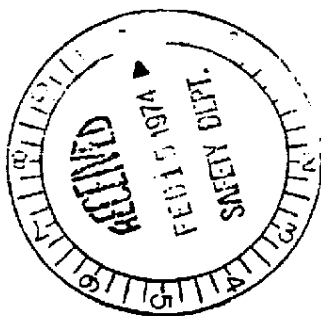
The Louisville facility uses vinyl chloride in the processing of a plastic for manufacture of phonograph records and some food containers.

Block said Goodrich Co. records show at least 29 employees at its Louisville installation have died of cancer since the facility went into operation in the 1940s. Of that number, 22, worked with vinyl chloride, Block said.

He said the four whose deaths have been attributed to angiosarcoma all died within the last six years and all probably were exposed to high concentrations of vinyl chloride during clearing operations.

Goodrich officials said the company's standards regarding exposure to vinyl chloride are

much stricter than the federal government's. The company said it enforces standards allowing a maximum exposure of 50 parts per million parts of air, compared with government standards of 500 parts per million parts of air.



U.S. officials vow more protection

'New' cancer is linked to Goodrich deaths

By WARD SINCLAIR
Staff Writer
 WASHINGTON — Federal medical officials have concluded that the deaths of at least three workers at a B. F. Goodrich plant in Louisville resulted from a "new" occupational cancer to which some 5,000 workers in the United States may be exposed.

The discovery of angiosarcoma of the liver, which was fatal to three and possibly four Louisville plant workers, as a new occupational cancer was made yesterday by Dr. Moses S. Key, director of the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH).

After a meeting with state, federal, industry and labor representatives here, Key announced a series of "positive" steps taken to protect polyvinyl chloride workers and to gather more scientific data on angiosarcoma, the most fatal of liver cancers.

The three Louisville deaths between September 1971 and last December, which were not publicly linked until a Goodrich announcement last week, set off a series of tremors in the polyvinyl chloride industry. The fourth employee died in 1972.

A NIOSH spokesman said after yesterday's

meeting that other workers at the Bells Lane Goodrich plant have reported liver problems that may be linked to their employment in areas where polyvinyl chloride vapors are prevalent.

Key's office, following the meeting that was closed to the press, released a statement quoting the NIOSH director as saying these actions are being taken in response to the situation:

NIOSH is recommending that interim industrial-hygiene precautions and controls be instituted at the Goodrich plant.

The federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) currently enforces a standard of 500 parts of polyvinyl chloride vapors per million parts of air, but the standard is aimed at health effects other than angiosarcoma, which until now had not been linked to the chemical.

NIOSH will "accelerate" an industry-wide epidemiological study in an effort to produce more information on the cause-and-effect relationship of polyvinyl chloride and angiosarcoma.

In conjunction with the National

Cancer Institute, NIOSH will start toxicological studies using laboratory animals to get more information. The earliest of the results would not be available for at least a year, a NIOSH spokesman said.

Additionally, the agency reported that the Department of Health, Education and

Tomorrow might be renamed Rainday

It's going to be a great weekend for golf—if you want to watch the Hawaiian Open on television. The weatherman predicts cloudy skies for tonight with a chance of rain, and more of the same tomorrow.

The low temperature tonight is expected to be near 30. The high tomorrow will be in the upper 40s. The low temperature last night was 52.

No sunshine is expected until Monday. The National Weather Service says that there's 20 per cent chance of rain tonight and 20 per cent chance tomorrow. Full weather data on Page A8.

Welfare has moved through official channels to obtain the release of toxicological data from a study not yet completed in Europe.

A summary table of early data from the European study indicates that vinyl chloride, which is used in the manufacture of polyvinyl chloride, is probably the chief suspect among the more than 50 chemical substances to which polymerization workers are exposed.

(Polyvinyl chloride is used to make phonograph records and plastic pipe, among other things.)

Key's statement yesterday said that pathologists at the government's National Institutes of Health clinical center had reviewed the Louisville death cases and confirmed the angiosarcoma diagnoses made independently in Kentucky.

An industrial-hygiene team from NIOSH and the Kentucky Department of Labor visited the Bells Lane plant last week and made interim recommendations to Goodrich for tightening controls and

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'New' cancer and Goodrich deaths linked

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reducing worker exposure to vinyl chloride to an absolute minimum. Meanwhile, there were other developments in the case:

The AFL-CIO has scheduled a meeting in Akron, Ohio, for Feb. 12, when industrywide implications of the cancer outbreak in Louisville will be discussed. The union already has a task force investigating in the polyvinyl chloride industry.

OSHA announced that it will hold an informational and fact-finding hearing in Washington at the Department of Labor on Feb. 15 to gather more data in connection with setting federal worker-protection standards.

Sheldon Samuels, an industrial-hygiene expert at the AFL-CIO, said yesterday that he and other labor officials are "gravely concerned" about the Louisville situation and that workers are "very scared."

He said that since 1971, for example, the Dow Chemical Co. has voluntarily enforced a standard in its own plants that is 10 times lower than the current federal standard of 500 parts of polyvinyl chloride vapor.

"How concluded there were effects on the workers at at least 100 parts per million and they set a 10-parts-per-million standard for themselves," Samuels said.

Goodrich officials have contended that they, too, are enforcing a standard in their Louisville plant and in four others around the country that is far below the maximum amount permitted by OSHA.

"We think the Louisville situation will come under control," Samuels said, "and we think the reaction of the company will be responsible. They are not to be criticized on this."

Samuels, however, had harsher words for the government. He charged that NIOSH and the chief of its toxicological branch, Dr. Herbert Stockinger, have not been responsive to the polyvinyl chloride situation in plants around the country.

"Stockinger set the original standards," Samuels said, "and he recently cut the standard from 500 to 250 parts per million. He is the one who is responsible for lowering the new standard. He found out what the most understandable system wants to do and then he set it at that level."

Investigation of rare liver cancer gets national, international attention

By CHARLES R. BARCOCK

Courier-Journal Staff Writer

The investigation of the chemical believed to have caused the rare liver cancer that killed four workers at the Louisville D. F. Goodrich plant has taken on national and international scope.

Dr. J. Bradford Block, medical consultant for the Kentucky Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), reported last night the following actions from an all-day meeting at the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) in Washington:

Two leading pathologists, from the National Institutes of Health and the Na-

tional Cancer Institute, confirmed that all four men died of angiosarcoma of the liver, an unusual form of cancer.

Acting on the belief that the cancer was caused by the men's exposure to the chemical vinyl chloride, NIOSH declared it a new occupational disease.

Dr. Marcus Key, director of NIOSH, set up task forces of the 25 medical and industry experts at the meeting to make a worldwide study of the use of the chemical and its effects on workers. Special emphasis will be placed on further testing of 55 workers at the Louisville plant whose blood has shown abnormalities in early tests.

"Right now, the only four known cases of this disease are right here in Louisville," Block said. "But this thing has tremendous implications nationally and internationally."

He noted that statistics cited at the meeting yesterday show that 13 plants in the United States manufacture vinyl chloride, and 15 more plants use it in such a way that employees could be exposed to it. It is estimated that a total of 6500 workers at these plants could have been exposed.

"And they make a lot more use of vinyl

See PROBE

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Probe of rare liver cancer gains wider attention

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chloride in Europe," Block said. "I think when people start looking back at medical records in other places we're sure to find more deaths from this particular disease."

The Louisville plant uses the chemical to make polyvinyl chloride, a plastic used for such things as phonograph records and some food containers.

The federal Food and Drug Administration was represented at yesterday's meeting, Block noted, because of the use of polyvinyl chloride in food containers and wrappers. "There's no reason to believe there's any danger to the general public," he said, "but FDA wants to stay informed."

The D.F. Goodrich plant in Louisville reported last week that it was investigating the cancer deaths of three men (a fourth was later added) to see if they were related to their work. State and federal OSHA officials then joined in the search.

Block said his state staff will work with the company and the Center for Disease Control in Atlanta to continue research into past medical records at the Louisville plant and to complete tests on the other workers at the plant who have been particularly exposed to vinyl chloride.

The doctor said that Goodrich records

show at least 20 workers at the plant have died of cancer since the 1940s, when it opened. This is not an unusually high number, Block emphasized. Of those, however, 22 had worked with vinyl chloride.

At the plant only about 270 of some 1,200 workers are involved in the vinyl chloride manufacturing process. "It's just another area we'll have to go back and do more work on," Block said.

Block said that R. F. Goodrich began testing the blood of 271 workers in the vinyl chloride section of the plant last September. Of those, 55 were found to have some form of abnormal liver function and re-testing was completed this week.

When the results are in, probably some time next week, Block said, doctors will be able to determine if more should be done.

Other organizations represented at the meeting in Washington yesterday will continue the investigation of vinyl chloride on the national and international levels, Block added.

The State Department is contacting at least one European country which is reported to have done research on vinyl chloride that has not been published in the West.

The Manufacturing Chemists Association, which had already been conducting a study of industry use of the chemical, will broaden and intensify its research.

NIOSH is starting a worldwide literature search for medical data on the chemical and the rare angiosarcoma it's now linked with.

Among the questions the experts are seeking answers to are whether long levels of low exposure or brief periods of high exposure to the vapors of the chemical lead to the cancer, Block said. The four men who died were all veteran employees who were probably exposed to high concentrations during cleaning operations.

Present federal regulations set standards of no more than 500 parts of vinyl chloride per million parts of air. Goodrich officials say their plant standard is much more rigid, only 50 parts per million.

The federal government will hold a public hearing Feb. 15 on whether its 500 parts per million standard is safe. Block said he didn't think there'd be any move there to argue against lowering the standard, he said.

Liver Cancer Put On List Of Occupational Diseases

WASHINGTON (AP) — A rare liver cancer fatal to four B.F. Goodrich employees in Louisville, Ky., has been named a new occupational disease by the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH).

Pathologists from the National Institutes of Health and the National Cancer Institute confirmed at a day-long meeting Friday that the four died of angiosarcoma of the liver.

It was declared an occupational disease in the belief that it stemmed from exposure to the chemical vinyl chloride.

The Goodrich plant at Louisville uses vinyl chloride to make polyvinyl chloride, a plastic used for phonograph records and some food containers and wrappings.

Dr. Marcus Key, director of NIOSH, organized 35 medical and industry experts at Friday's meeting into task forces for a worldwide study of how the chemical is used and how it affects workers.

"Right now, the only four known cases of this disease are right here in Louisville," said Dr. J. Bradford Block, medical consultant for the Kentucky Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). "But this thing has tremendous im-

plications nationally and internationally."

Block said statistics cited Friday showed 13 plants in the nation make vinyl chloride, and 15 more plants use it such that employees could be exposed.

It was estimated that a total of 6,500 workers in the U.S. plants could have been exposed, "and they make a lot more use of vinyl chloride in Europe," Block said. "I think when people start looking back at medical records in other places we're sure to find more deaths from this particular disease."

The Louisville plant said last week it was investigating the cancer deaths of three men in recent years — a fourth was added later — to see if they were related to their work.

Block said the company tested the blood of 271 workers in the vinyl chloride section last September, and results are due next week of further tests on 55 who showed abnormal liver functions.

Records show at least 29 workers have died of cancer since the plant opened in the 1940s, not an unusually high number, Block stressed. Of the 29, though, 22 worked with vinyl chloride.

Federal standards allow no

more than 500 parts of vinyl chloride per million parts of air. Goodrich officials say their standard is more rigid, 50 parts per million.

Block and his state OSHA staff will work with the company and the Center for Disease Control in Atlanta, he said, continuing to check medical records.

Other organizations represented at the Washington meeting will probe the use and effects of the chemical on national and international levels, Block added.

NIOSH will begin a worldwide search of literature for medical data about the chemical and about angiosarcoma of the liver.

The Manufacturing Chemists Association will expand and intensify its research on industrial use of the chemical.

Federal Food and Drug Administration representatives also were at the meeting, Block said,

because of the chemical's use in food packaging.

"There's no reason to believe there's any danger to the general public," he said, "but FDA wants to stay informed."