

Not only has the asbestos textile operation itself been simplified, but at each machine dust, suppressant is applied to the yarn to prevent fibers from detaching.

Respirators are used at any and all stations where the monitoring of the fiber count in the air determines that the OSHA standard of 5 fibers per cubic centimeter has been exceeded. These areas requiring respirators are marked by lines on the floor and posted. Even maintenance personnel entering the marked area for short periods must wear respirators.

Plant housekeeping is scheduled, controlled, and constantly checked. The mandatory procedures have become habit with all employees, and the responsibility for maintenance of standard practices lies with each plant manager. Corporate auditors for housekeeping pay unannounced visits to all JM plants such as Manville. Areas not passing prescribed practices are photographed by the auditors. The pictures are presented to the plant manager, who, within a prescribed period of about one week, must send a picture of the same area to corporate headquarters showing that the condition has been rectified. These are not just instructions written in a manual; they are conditions that can be viewed any day in any part of the Manville plant.

Manville is a plant with 2200 employees, with training and organization so well set up that no more than two dozen men are required full time for safety and environmental control. If you ask anyone at the plant why this is so, the answer is that it is everyone's job from the top-down.

Safety is so integrated with environmental control for health that it is difficult to separate them. Ask when the safety program started at Manville and the answer comes back "Before any employee here can remember." For the year 1971, three out of four manufacturing units at Manville had frequency rate of disabling injuries as low as the industries rated best by the National Safety Council. One of the four units did not have a good record for 1971. The overall disabling injury rate for the seventy-odd JM plants for the last ten-year period has steadily declined with the exception of 1971 and is among the best in manufacturing industries.

If it were not for the fact that asbestos dust, in the last five years, has become recognized as a deadly health hazard, Manville might have been touted as a model plant. An environmental control program started at Manville in 1955 with one of the first trial hygiene laboratories in any American plant, and has been progressing steadily toward correcting the health hazard conditions of dust, noise, and toxic substances before most other industries started such activities. If so much progress had not been made toward correcting the health hazard conditions over a period of many years, this plant might today have been shut down. It is ironic that this plant was the one where so many employees worked in the past

under conditions that lead to the discovery of the deadly nature of the material they were processing presumably for the benefit of man.

For those with less sentiment, who ask the question "Can American industry afford the occupational safety and health standards that the 1970 Act demands?" the answer seems also to be provided by JM's Manville plant. It is operating at a profit.

JM's Manville Plant . . . the record as the Union sees it

Organized labor, which fought hard for the passage of the 1970 Act, then worked equally hard for the "creation of a strong and effective permanent enforcement standard on asbestos under the Occupational Safety and Health Act to protect workers who are exposed to asbestos fiber dust."

Much of the Union's story of the Manville Plant was obtained in an interview with Robert Klinger, Vice President of Local 800, United Papermakers and Paperworkers). Bob Klinger is alert, knowledgeable, and impressive as representative of the Union. He started in 1959 in the Manville Plant as a machine operator in the pipe mill and has been a VP of the Local for three years, spending full time now on Union business. He participated in a presentation to the press by the Industrial Union Department, AFL/CIO on March 14, 1972, prior to the public hearings, on the permanent asbestos standard.

Until 1967, Local 800 did not receive much information from Johns-Manville concerning the relation of asbestos to the health of Manville Plant employees. According to the Union, the Public Health Service studied the Manville Plant in 1965. The results of this study were sent to the Company and to the State of New Jersey, but not to Local 800. A union request for an inspection in 1966 by the State of New Jersey produced no results because the State lacked up-to-date air sampling equipment.

As far as Local 800 is concerned, progress toward cooperation by Johns-Manville started in 1967 when, at the insistence of the Union, workers were told the results of their company medical examinations. Also in 1967, there was the October 12 letter to Marshall Smith, then President of the Local, from Dr. Maxwell Borow which pointed to 18 cases of mesothelioma in the area, possibly due to asbestos exposure. Dr. Borow stated in his letter that he had requested some financial aid toward preparing an exhibit to call the dangers of asbestos exposure to the attention of the medical profession. His letter states that he was turned down by Johns-Manville.

Bob Klinger accounted without error or omission for the fact that Local 800 was turned down by JM in the efforts to obtain cooperation toward recognition of the health hazard and the elimination of the causes. Certainly by today's standards, JM did make errors in judgement in its relations with its union.