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DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE
PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE
FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION
ROCKVILLE MARYLAND 20852

JUN 7 1972

Honorable Paul S. Sarbanes
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

JUN 3 REC'D

Dear Mr. Sarbanes:

This is in further reply to your letter of April 19 to the Assistant Secretary for Legislation of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare concerning asbestos-containing products.

The Food and Drug Administration is aware of the recent concern over the presence of asbestos-form particles in talc which may be used in food products.

Since there is some difficulty in identifying asbestos in talc because of their chemical similarity, we are now in the process of evaluating the available analytic procedures for determination of asbestos in talc. However, in the meantime we are moving ahead with analysis of products containing talc, with existing methodology, for the presence of asbestos-form particles. We are attempting to determine the degree of exposure by the average consumer to products containing these substances. We are also preparing a draft for a proposed provisional regulation for the use in foods of talc which is free of asbestos-form particles.

Funds for animal studies on the toxicological effects of talc have not been available. A memorandum of need is being developed to justify the needed funds for contract feeding studies on silicates, including talc.

The Bureau of Product Safety of the Food and Drug Administration has reviewed the NIOSH document "Criteria for a Recommended Standard ... Occupational Exposure to Asbestos" and the quotation Mr. Castleman gave from page V-3. We are unaware of any type of asbestos product, intended for use in the household, which could be expected to give rise to such concentrations of airborne fibers that its use would overwhelm the clearing mechanism. Since long-term exposure to levels contemplated by the standard would not be expected to overwhelm the clearing mechanism, the level contemplated by the quoted passage must be much higher.

EPA has at the present time no specific regulatory actions underway except the prohibition of use of asbestos as a component of general use garments. We are continuing to explore the possibility of hazard from other uses of asbestos-containing products in the home and methods for control of such hazards as are discovered, including in our consideration labeling, construction criteria such as resin-bonding, and if it should become necessary, banning specific as yet unidentified products, to control likelihood of release of airborne fibers of asbestos.

Thank you for your interest. Please let us know if we can be of further assistance.

Sincerely yours,

Gerald F. Meyer

Gerald F. Meyer, Director
Office of Legislative Services