E. E. RUMBERGER

PITTSBURGH OFFICE - 6

MR. T. I. ALKIRE
PITTSBURGH OFFICE - 21

MR. H. P. BRUESCHKE
PITTSBURGH OFFICE - 19

1982 July 06

RE: COATINGS AND PAINT CONTAINING CONSTITUENT ASBESTOS

For a number of years, Alcoa has recognized the very serious potential health hazard represented by the various forms of asbestos use in our plant. Exposure to asbestos fibers can lead to asbestosis and various forms of cancer.

Starting almost ten years ago, plants were encouraged to find safer substitutes. About three years ago, a more formal program was started with the plants, Purchasing, and Engineering with the objective to eliminate asbestos and asbestos-containing materials wherever possible. The focus has been primarily with production and process operations. Possibly, we have been remiss in not following up construction applications.

For background, I am enclosing a report issued earlier this year on our progress in finding substitute materials. With Engineering and the plants working together, we have had considerable success in finding safer substitute materials for most applications in Alcoa's plants. Asbestos manufacturers have also been extremely active, along with other companies, in developing substitute material. Asbestos is being produced in less and less quantities, and manufacturers support efforts to develop substitutes. In many instances, we are finding substitute materials to be less expensive than the prices now being applied to asbestos considering its liabilities.

That brings us to paints and coatings. As discussed, we recently discovered a masonry paint being used in Warrick manufactured by De Voe and Reynolds - Division of Grow Group, Inc., Louisville, KY, containing 14% asbestos. You are in the process now of developing further information on this paint. This has raised the obvious question of how many other paints identified in Engineering Standard 33.1.4 might be in a similar category.

It would be appropriate, and I am requesting, that you work with Purchasing to determine the status of all of our approved paints relative to whether they contain asbestos.

ALCOA

It is my understanding that asbestos may be a non-essential ingredient in many paints being used only as a filler. Except for acid or heat resistance, asbestos would generally seem to be non-essential for masonry structural coatings. Any non-cellulose filler would therefore suffice.

Some people have wanted to take solace in the safety of asbestos fiber ingredients if they are "encapsulated". This seems to mean different things to different people. One interpretation is that the fibers are entirely encased or surrounded by another material; another definition seems to include if the fibers are simply contained in a tar or resinous binder. While these might be effective means of eliminating fiber dissemination in air during application, spraying, etc., it does not necessarily answer all of the possibilities for potential people exposures. As an example, I would suspect that in the demolition or destruction of masonry buildings which have a dried paint film containing asbestos, we would probably find considerable fiber generation during demolition.

Because of these possibilities, it seems prudent to me that we include paints and coatings in our overall objective to make Alcoa as asbestos free as possible. It is with this purpose in mind that I ask that we try to identify any paints that now contain asbestos that are on the Alcoa approved list and determine if there are safer substitute paints and coatings available.

E. E. RUMBERGER

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Enclosure