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DOCUMENT DESCRIPTION: Memo RE Meeting with Dr. Malcolm Ross, US Geological Survey, on April 6, 1978

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April 11, 1978

MEMORANDUM

TO: File - Powhattan Mining Company
Baltimore County

FROM: Ronald E. Lipinski
Bureau of Air Quality Control

SUBJECT: Meeting with Dr. Malcolm Ross, U.S. Geological Survey, on April 6, 1978.

Conclusions:

I was referred to Dr. Ross by Dr. Crowley of the Maryland Geological Survey. Dr. Ross is a mineralogist with the U.S. Geological Survey in Reston, Virginia, whose expertise in the past several years has been in asbestos minerals.

I discussed the asbestos problem briefly with Dr. Ross and showed him samples of the ore and material processed by the Powhattan Mining Company. Dr. Ross examined the specimens under an optical microscope and identified the blue fibrous asbestos from Africa as crocidolite, which is an asbestiform variety of reibeckite, a member of the amphibole group. The other samples were identified as a talc-anthophyllite ore definitely containing anthophyllite asbestos, which is also in the amphibole group.

Dr. Ross stated that crocidolite is the only amphibole asbestiform that contains sodium and can therefore be differentiated from the other forms. Dr. Ross feels that the most dangerous of any of the asbestos minerals is crocidolite and feels that all other asbestos minerals are much less dangerous. He stated that crocidolite is now mined in only one place in the world, South Africa.

Dr. Ross was very familiar with the Powhattan Mining Company through newspaper articles that appeared in The Sun on Thursday, September 15, 1977. Dr. Ross was highly opinionated regarding the medical data on health effects of asbestos. He stated that he had studied the health effects data carefully and feels that there is a problem only in certain areas using certain minerals. As an example, he referred to the Quebec, Canada mining industry where he stated there are readings of chrysotile asbestos in the air and in the water at levels many times higher than in U.S. areas. There are years of medical data available and the area has been studied at length. He said that the conclusions indicated that there is no unusual health problems at all in the area. Dr. Ross discussed data which indicated that mesothelioma is mostly very high only among shipyard workers. This data came from a publication in Preventive Medicine Magazine in 1977 by McDonald and McDonald entitled "Epidemiology of Mesothelioma from Estimated Incidence".

REL:bw

cc: Mr. Steve Aust
Baltimore County Health Department

Additional files secured as enclosed from Division of Air Pollution, Baltimore County Health Department from about 1969 on. Additional records are being secured from the State of Maryland Bureau of Air Quality.
