FILE NAME: WR Grace (WRG)

DATE: February 1977

DOC#: WRG172

DOCUMENT DESCRIPTION: 1977 Memo to JC Yang from HC Duecker regarding tremolite

CAMBRIDGE

RECD FEB 22 1977
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TO: J. C. Yang

DATE: February 18, 1977

FROM: H. C. Duecker

SUBJECT: Tremolite in Verxite

CC: W. R. Hanlon
O. M. Favorito
H. A. Eschenbach
E. S. Wood
R. M. Vining

O. M. Favorito, in his memo of February 9, 1977, has raised the question as to whether Verxite may continue to be sold as a food additive because of possible asbestos content. Verxite is produced exclusively from Kearney #4 vermiculite and, after expansion, is passed over a scalping screen to remove particles smaller than 14 mesh.

Our discussion of the product led us to the tentative conclusion that even if it were possible to detect a few asbestos particles in the product (by some laborious laboratory procedure), the concentration would be found to be so low that quantification of the asbestos content would be virtually impossible.

Further, there was some question as to whether tremolite asbestos has ever been found to induce cancer in the digestive tract of man or animal. We would like to have you assemble all the pertinent literature on the subject over the next four to six weeks, and on the basis of this literature attempt to identify any potential problem with this product.

Also, would you please obtain two or more representative samples of Verxite for further evaluation.

H. C. Duecker

HCD:mlr

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