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For Attention: Messrs. Mesler, Hall, Heppes, Neil, Sweeney, Foote, Boranian, Bettoli, Dersch, Eddins.

Date: March 2,1966

Copy to: Messrs. O'Leary, Neel

Reference:

Subject: ASBESTOS - POTENTIAL CAUSE OF CANCER

Today's newspapers carried articles reporting on research into the question of asbestos as a cause of cancer. The report very strongly suggests that those who work with asbestos have a better than 50% chance of dying of cancer and one chance in five of dying from lung cancer.

This report is, no doubt, receiving wide publication and can be productive of substantial employee relations problems for us.

It seems to me that we would be well advised to know as much about this research as possible, to know whether there are any preventive measures (either operationally or with our employees) that can and should be taken - - and to consider a course of action as a Company - - as an industry.

This memo is intended to alert all of us to a potentially serious problem and to stimulate some positive action so that we shall not be caught unprepared.

L.B.Farrell

LBF:at

Attachments

GAF 16929

Asbestos Dust Called a Hazard To at Least One-Fourth of U.S.

N.Y. 17. 85 — 8/2/66

By JANE E. BRODY

Asbestos dust, which has already been connected with the development of fatal cancer in one-half of asbestos workers, may be a potential health hazard for one-quarter of the population or more, it was reported yesterday.

This preliminary finding was described by Dr. Irving J. Selikoff in announcing the establishment of an environmental health laboratory at Mount Sinai Hospital. The laboratory will further investigate the dangers to man of asbestos and other environmental contaminants.

Dr. Selikoff said the link between cancer and asbestos had led him to suspect that other mineral dusts that contaminate both urban and rural air might create medical hazards for the public.

The new laboratory will be headed by Dr. Selikoff who, with Dr. Jacob Churg, found that asbestos workers eventually showed six to seven times the normal death rate from lung cancer and three times the normal death rate from cancer of the stomach, colon and rectum.

Other Workers Affected

Dr. Selikoff noted that the dangers of exposure to asbestos dust were not limited to those who work directly with this ubiquitous insulator and other materials. The dangers, he said, extend to workers in "contiguous trades," such as other construction workers and their families.

According to the findings of three recent limited studies, the dangers might extend to the general population. The studies, which involved autopsies on 1,100 persons in three cities, showed that 25 per cent of the people had asbestos lodged in their lungs.

Dr. Selikoff explained that the studies had used a "crude technique" that disclosed only those asbestos fibers that had become coated by an iron-rich material while lodged in the lungs. A more refined technique now shows that many persons harbor noncoated asbestos fibers as well, he said.

New Study Started

Dr. Selikoff and his colleagues at the new laboratory have started a three-year study in which they will:

¶Examine, with the deceased's family's approval, the lung tissue of the from 3,000 to 1,000 persons expected to die in the next two years at Mount Sinai, Elmhurst Hospital and Veterans Hospital in the Bronx. The doctors will look for uncoated as well as coated asbestos fibers in the tissues.

¶Look for correlations between the causes of death and the presence of asbestos fibers in lung tissue.

¶Determine the occupational history of the deceased and their relatives and other pertinent background information.

Asbestos is a fibrous mineral highly valued for its noncorrosive and long-wearing properties. In addition to its common use as a fireproof material, Dr. Selikoff said, asbestos makes up about 50 per cent of asphalt tile and is used in dental cement, brake linings, plastics, beer filters, gas masks and paper. Until last year, some schools used asbestos dust instead of sand for children to play in.

Work With Asbestos Held Cancer Factor

If you work with asbestos, you have a more than 50% chance of dying of cancer and one chance in five of dying of lung cancer, Dr. Irving J. Selikoff, head of the Mount Sinai Hospital Division of Environmental Medicine, reported yesterday.

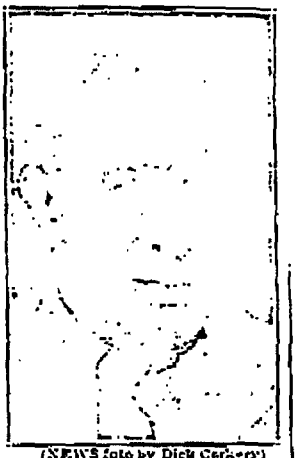
Asbestos may be a danger to the public also, he said, since auto brake linings may give off asbestos shreds and some foreign cigarets use asbestos in their filters. Many World War II gas masks also had them in their filters.

Set Up a Laboratory

Mount Sinai announced formation of an environmental health laboratory which will try to assess the danger to the general population, as well as in industrial occupations.

Earlier research there linked asbestos exposure to several varieties of cancer, and a statement from the hospital noted that some asbestos fibers may be present in the lungs of at least one fourth of the urban population of the U.S.

Mount Sinai scientists found among asbestos insulation workers recently six to seven times the "expected" rate of lung cancer and thrice the normal rate of cancer of the stomach, colon and rectum.



(NEWS foto by Dick Corkery)

Dr. Irving J. Selikoff at press conference yesterday.

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GAF 16930

Herald Tribune 3/2/63

Study Links Asbestos To Cancer

By Earl Ubell
Science Editor

Scientists have known for a long time that asbestos was bad for your lungs. Now a study of New York City workers, both roofers and insulation blowers, reveals that exposure to the mineral sends lung-cancer death rates skyrocketing.

The figures—gathered by doctors at Mount Sinai Hospital—show that such workers have eight times the lung-cancer death rate as would be expected in a non-exposed population.

More surprisingly, the studies reveal that such workers run four times the risk of getting cancer in other parts of the body, with cancer of the colon particularly singled out. For all other diseases, the insulation workers have the same death rate as the rest of the population.

These findings were emphasized yesterday by Dr. Irving J. Selikoff, head of Mt. Sinai's Division of Environmental Medicine, on the occasion of the establishment of an environmental health laboratory in the hospital. The laboratory has received grants totaling $324,-000 from the United States Public Health Service and the New York City Health Research Council.

Dr. Selikoff also pointed out that cigarette smoking seems to heighten the effects of the asbestos. Among 130 men exposed to asbestos 20 years or more who were nonsmokers, he found one lung-cancer death among 316 nonsmokers, 21 such deaths.

GAF 16931