FILE NAME: Talc (TALC)

DATE: 1973 July 28

DOC#: TALC076

DOCUMENT DESCRIPTION: Press Release - FDA Ban on Asbestos in Food and Drugs Urged

ENVIRONMENTAL DEFENSE FUND

1525 18th STREET, N.W., WASHINGTON, D.C. 20036/202 [illegible]

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
Thursday, July 28, 1973

For Further Information Contact:
Albert Fritsch 332-6000
Center for Science in the Public Interest

Scott H. Lang 833-1484
Environmental Defense Fund

FDA BAN ON ASBESTOS IN DRINKS AND DRUGS URGED

Two public interest groups today gave the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) 30 days to act to ban the use of asbestos filters in food and drug processing, and to establish a zero tolerance for asbestos impurities in talc used as a food additive. The Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI) and the Environmental Defense Fund (EDF) declared that the intentional addition of cancer-causing asbestos particles constitutes "an imminent and wholly unnecessary hazard to public health."

Asbestos is a proven cause of lung and stomach cancer among those who work with it, and even among neighbors of asbestos plants and families of asbestos workers. Little is known about the effects of prolonged low-level exposure to asbestos in foods and drugs. But the long latency period between onset of exposure and the development of cancer (30 years or more) could allow these dangers to go unnoticed for decades before a public health crisis becomes evident.

The petition points out that the contamination of foods and drugs with asbestos from these sources has been known to the FDA for several years. The petition recounts a long series

of letters between Barry Castleman of CSPI and the FDA, in which FDA at first made general remarks about having a study in progress (analyzing beverages for asbestos) and later denied that proper analytical methods were available. In the meanwhile one study finding asbestos fibers in intravenous drugs had already been published and another showing asbestos in gin and beer was announced at Senate hearings by CSPI earlier this year. "This deliberate subterfuge. . . shows the FDA's contempt for its stated mission of protecting the public health," stated Castleman and Dr. Albert Fritsch, CSPI director, in a recent report called "Asbestos and You."

In August of 1972 the FDA recognized the hazards of ingested asbestos and proposed a ban on all talcs used in food processing which contain asbestos. Talc deposits commonly contain asbestos impurities. EDF Attorney Scott Lang says, "final action on this proposed regulation has apparently been postponed indefinitely despite the continued addition of asbestos-containing talc in food." Lang went on to say that the recent EPA prohibition against drinking asbestos-contaminated municipal water near the Reserve Mining Company in Minnesota is an ominous sign of the ubiquitousness of asbestos hazards to the public.

Other recent actions on asbestos include a lawsuit by EDF, CSPI and several other groups against the Environmental Protection Agency over the asbestos, mercury, and beryllium standards promulgated by that Agency. They argue for tighter construction and demolition standards needed to protect public health from airborne asbestos. CSPI recently petitioned The Federal Trade Commission for hazard labeling of all consumer products containing asbestos and for an inventory of all asbestos products on the market. Another lawsuit by EDF and the AFL-CIO demands more stringent asbestos standards for the workplace than those published last year by the Labor Department