

NICHOLAS ROUSSOS
COMMISSIONER

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Executive Office of Manpower Affairs

Department of Labor and Industries

Division of Occupational Hygiene

39 Boylston Street, Boston 02116

September 10, 1975

IN YOUR REPLY
REFER TO FILE

76-91

Mr. Paul E. Bureau
Personnel Manager
Monsanto Polymers and Petrochemicals Company
730 Worcester Street
Indian Orchard, MA 01051

Dear Paul:

This is to place in writing the requests I made in our telephone conversation of September 9. As previously stated in my letter of July 16, 1975, and in several subsequent conversations with you, we have been informed of an excess of cancer deaths among your employees, particularly among those said to have worked in the P.V.C. fabrication area, building 85. It is imperative that we review all past records of employment in that building.

You have suggested that some of our preliminary employment data are incorrect. It is precisely this sort of question that makes our review of the actual records necessary. Only by an unbiased review of mortality from the complete employment rosters will we be able to calculate precise cancer death rates.

I sent you a list of eighty-five deceased Monsanto workers on August 6 and on September 9 requested complete work histories on the twenty cancer cases among them. This information will help us decide which work areas need to be most carefully studied.

I will be in touch with your office later this week to make definite arrangements for beginning this study.

Sincerely,

John Lewis, M. D.
Occupational Hygiene Physician

JL/mc

*P.S. Note that enclosed
memo to Dr. Linker includes one additional
death we were just informed of.*

RSV 0008268



To: John F. Finklea, M.D., Director, N.I.O.S.H.
From: John W. Lewis, M.D., N.I.O.S.H. physician assigned
to the Division of Occupational Hygiene, Department
of Labor and Industries, Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Subject: Monsanto Polymers and Petrochemicals Company, Indian
Orchard, Mass.
Date: September 9, 1975

Since July of this year, this office has been informed of eighty-six deaths among past workers at Monsanto, Indian Orchard. This information was provided by K.O.S.H.A., Committee for Occupational Safety and Health Action, a group of workers formed at the time of the vinyl chloride alert to coordinate information on work-related health problems. This group has no official connection with the union.

The data were obtained from active and retired Monsanto workers who recalled fellow workers in the vinyl chloride and PVC operations who had died of any cause. Eighty-six of these deaths were confirmed by finding a Massachusetts death certificate, and the causes of death were tabulated. These diagnoses are shown in the table using the I.C.D. code numbers (eight revision). "Vinyl Chloride" workers were said to have worked in buildings 84, 88, or 92 in which vinyl chloride monomer was used. "P.V.C. fabrication" workers were said to have worked in building 85 in which V.C.M. was not used. "Maintenance" workers were said to have worked in any of the above buildings.

Among workers said to have worked in P.V.C. fabrication (building 85), 27.5% of the deaths, 14 of 51, were from cancer. This compares to 16.5% of deaths caused by cancer nationally. Furthermore, 4 of these 14 cancers were pancreatic. Cancer of the pancreas accounts for only 5.5% of cancer deaths nationally.

Officers of Monsanto, Indian Orchard have been informed of this apparent excess of cancer deaths, and they have expressed doubt about the reported employment history of some of the deceased workers. They have been asked to permit review by this office of the complete employment records for the P.V.C. fabrication area. Employment records of the deceased workers have also been requested. We propose to investigate the mortality experience among these workers by means of a cohort study.

JNL/mc

cc: Paul Alvarado, N.I.O.S.H.
Paul E. Bureau, Monsanto
K.O.S.H.A.
Electrical, Radio, and Machine Workers, Local 288

RSV 0008269

CAUSE OF DEATH OF 86 MONSANTO CHEMICAL WORKERS

(I.C.D. Eighth Revision)

Cause of Death		Vinyl Chloride	P.V.C. Fabrication	Main- tenance	Total
Infectious diseases	000 - 136	0	1	0	1
Cancer:					
Esophagus	150	0	1	1	2
Colon	153	1	1	0	2
Bile system	156	0	1	0	1
Pancreas	157	0	4	0	4
Lung	162	2	3	1	6
Bone and connective	170 - 174	1	2	0	3
Prostate	185	0	1	0	1
Lymph and blood	200 - 209	0	1	1	2
Myxoma	215	0	1	0	1
Diabetes	250	0	1	0	1
Dementia	290	0	1	0	1
Polyneuritis	354	1	0	0	1
Rheumatic heart disease	394	0	1	0	1
Ischemic heart disease	410 - 414	7	20	6	33
Cerebrovascular disease	430 - 438	2	2	1	5
Aortic aneurysm	441	0	0	1	1
Pneumonia	486	1	0	0	1
Emphysema	492	1	2	0	3
Intestinal and peritoneal dis.	560 - 569	0	2	0	2
Liver necrosis and cirrhosis	570 - 571	1	1	2	4
Nephritis	582 - 583	2	0	0	2
Auto. accidents	800, 802, 864	0	3	0	3
Chemical toxins	963, 980, 986	2	2	0	4
Drowning	994	1	0	0	1
Total		22	51	13	86

13.2%

24.1%

15.1%

24.7%



RSV 0008270