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DR. A.C. GOTTESMAN

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b.g.

## BROADCAST EXCERPT

MICHAEL RICHARDS: Union Carbide Executives said today, they will fight the government's 1.3 million dollar fine imposed yesterday by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration. The largest such fine in its history.

Reagan Administration officials charged that Union Carbide has, willfully and routinely broken health and safety laws at its plant in Institute, West Virginia.

The fine is the latest development that raises doubts about Union Carbide's credibility. Many investigators are still challenging the Company's accounts of what caused the Bhopal, India disaster, when a Union Carbide factory leaked, killed more than 2,000 people.

And as NPR's Daniel Zwerdlin reports, internal company documents suggest that Union Carbide Executives misled government officials about another public health hazard, more than ten years ago.

DANIEL ZWERDLIN: The year is 1971 and health researchers are worried about the chemical called vinyl chloride. The chemical's widely used to make everything from baby bottles, to tires, from credit cards to car seats. In a few more years, scientists will learn that vinyl chloride is one of the most deadly chemicals in the workplace.

It causes fatal cancers in workers. But right now, in 1971, researchers are still studying its effects on animals. The Union Carbide Corporation has a big stake in this research, because it is one of the nation's biggest vinyl chloride producers.

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So, in May, 1971, executives at Union Carbide and several other companies fly one of the world's best-known vinyl chloride researchers to Washington, D.C., to tell them in a confidential meeting what he is discovering in the laboratory.

The researcher, an Italian scientist named, Pier Luigi Viola meets with the chemical company managers on May 5th and what he has to say troubles them.

They all know that Viola's previous studies, which had been discussed at previous scientific meetings, have shown that vinyl chloride causes cancer in animals, only at very high doses. And no one's been very worried about these findings because the doses were so high.

But now, Viola tells Union Carbide and other industry representatives, his new studies show that vinyl chloride is more dangerous than that, it causes cancer at far lower doses than anyone's ever suspected. The disturbing findings are still confidential, unpublished. Even government regulators don't have them.

And after the meeting a Union Carbide manager writes a memo describing why these new vinyl chloride discoveries could be damaging. The manager, Roscoe, Nick Wheeler, is chairman of an industry task force on the vinyl chloride issue and he writes, quote, publishing Doctor Viola's work in the U.S. could lead to serious problems, with regard to the vinyl chloride industry, unquote.

And Wheeler goes on to list some of the implications. For instance, he says that if government regulators learn about the new findings, food with vinyl chloride residues from the packaging could be banned. Wheeler suggests that Pennsylvania could ban vinyl chloride pollution in the air and that could have a big impact on pollution control costs.

And third, Wheeler says, in his 1971 memo, the present political climate in the U.S. is such that a campaign by Mr. R. Nader and others could force an industrial upheaval, via new laws or strict interpretations of the pollution and occupational health laws.

Finally, Union Carbide manager Wheeler concludes his memo by saying that, Union Carbide has a large stake in the area most likely to be affected by a government crackdown on vinyl chloride.

He says the company would be seriously hurt by arbitrary, or panic-induced government restrictions, his words. Wheeler's memo doesn't really recommend hiding the troubling new findings from the government but government sources who were involved with the vinyl chloride issue told me that Union Carbide and other companies did not tell government officials about the study.

But the story is not quite finished. Almost two years later, on July 17th, 1973, Union Carbide manager Nick Wheeler attends another confidential meeting about vinyl chloride. This time with chemical industry colleagues and government health and safety officials from the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health.

Even now, government officials still don't know that vinyl chloride causes cancer at low levels, in animals, and the Union Carbide memo about the meeting, stamped, Confidential, suggests that the Company is still not about to tell them. In this memo, Company manager, Wheeler confides that he and other industry executives have gotten together before the meeting and they've agreed to tell the government officials only about vinyl chloride studies that are generally known; his words.

After all, the whole goal of the meeting, Wheeler suggests is to reassure Government officials that vinyl chloride isn't too dangerous. Or in his words, to avoid over-reaction by government officials.

And after the meeting Wheeler seems to think the strategy's worked. He tells his colleagues in a memo that, the chances of precipitous action by the government on vinyl chloride were materially lessened, unquote.

As it turned out though, Union Carbide can't prevent the government crackdown on vinyl Chloride, after all. Six months later, executives at another company the B.F. Goodrich Corporation tell the government that they have evidence that vinyl chloride is causing rare liver cancers in workers.

Partly as a result of the Goodrich company's disclosure, the government uncovers more cancers in industry workers and a year later it issues strict new rules controlling cancer-causing vinyl chloride.

Just a few postscripts to this story, the Italian researcher who conducted the studies that Union Carbide wanted to keep quiet has died. The Union Carbide manager who wrote the memos, Nick Wheeler was later promoted to be Assistant Corporate Director of Product Safety.

Wheeler refused to talk about the issue to National Public Radio, on the advice, he told me of company lawyers. Wheeler did tell me though those are internal company documents you're quoting and you're not supposed to have them.

I'm Daniel Zwerdlin in Washington.

**RADIAN**  
CORPORATION

*f. Vinyl chloride*

October 17, 1990  
205-046-02-01

Ms. Meredith Scheck  
Vinyl Institute  
335 Lexington Ave.  
New York, NY 10017

Dear Ms. Scheck:

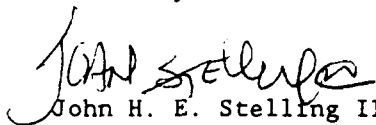
At the request of Mr. Jim Lewis of the BFGoodrich Company, we have enclosed six copies of the Level One Assessment of Emissions of Vinyl Chloride from PVC Manufacturing prepared for BFGoodrich Company as part of the permit application process for their facility in Niagara Falls in Ontario, Canada. Included in the report is an assessment of emission sources and emission levels representing the best control routinely achievable throughout the world-wide PVC manufacturing industry. Please note that some additional analysis was prepared after the draft report was submitted; these investigations were reported in a letter, which is included at the end of the enclosed reports.

The following parties submitted information used in our report. Please ensure that these parties receive their copy with our thanks and with the appreciation of the BFGoodrich Company.

Joe Ledvina, Vista Chemicals  
John Yonge, Shintech  
J. C. Lunn, Borden  
Vince Tretter, Georgia Gulf  
Joseph King, Occidental

Again, thank you for your help in gathering this information.

Sincerely,



John H. E. Stelling III, PE, REA  
Department Head

cc: Jim Lewis, BFGoodrich/Cleveland  
BFGoodrich Level One File

**SPI-01506**