

FILE NAME: General Motors (GM)

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DOCUMENT DESCRIPTION: Letter to Harry Pierce, GM, from Barry Castlman, Environmental Consultant RE Global Policy on Asbestos Products with Editorial Written by Harry Pierce Attached



Barry Castleman, Sc.D.

Environmental Consultant

October 26, 2000

Mr. Harry J. Pearce, Vice Chairman
General Motors Corporation
(fax 313-556-5108)

Global Asbestos Policy

Dear Mr. Pearce:

I was encouraged to write by your letter in the New York Times yesterday ("Business Principles"). I would like to receive a copy of GM's report on economic, environmental, and social performance for 1999-2000.

In the past, I have approached each of the Big Three U.S. auto makers about whether they have a global policy for eliminating the use of asbestos. An editorial I published about the disappointing results is enclosed. Since this was published in 1998, the European Union has decided that all member countries must ban asbestos by 2005, following existing national asbestos bans by all the leading economic powers of Europe. Brazil has announced that it will follow the E.U. timetable, too. Last month, the World Trade Organization dismissed Canada's challenge to the national asbestos ban in France (I was a scientific adviser to the European Commission in that case).

Two years ago, I found that none of the big auto companies would say if they had a global policy for eliminating asbestos in new vehicles and in the after-market. I learned that General Motors was still making some cars in North America with asbestos brakes, though such brakes were banned in original equipment and the after-market in the major European countries. And though GM had managed to find suitable, safer substitutes for asbestos engine gaskets years earlier in North America, the company was still using asbestos engine gaskets in Brazil. Even Swedish auto companies were found to be using asbestos-containing parts in Brazil, years after having had to cease the use of asbestos in their home markets. My editorial concluded, "Will any globally asbestos-free auto makers step forward and lead the rest?"

I am writing to know if GM has or is developing a global policy on phasing out asbestos in its products, and if so what that policy is. I would also like to know the extent to which asbestos is used in automotive friction materials and gaskets in products marketed today by GM in each of the regions of the world where asbestos has not been banned (North America, South America, Eastern Europe, Asia, Africa, Australia).

I hope that GM leadership is sufficiently committed to honoring corporate ethics in its operations worldwide to make the corporation a leader in the industry in getting rid of this needlessly dangerous material worldwide, and soon.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Enclosure: "Globally Asbestos-free Automobiles" editorial, 1998.

N.Y. Times

Oct. 25, 2000

Business Principles

To the Editor:

Re "Getting Religion on Corporate Ethics" (Business Day, Oct. 18):

Many corporations have applied the ethical principles you mention for many years. General Motors considers corporate ethics integral to its operations worldwide — from community involvement to employee relations.

G.M.'s current code of conduct has its roots in the original code established in the 1970's; G.M.'s environmental principles were formally adopted in 1991. G.M. endorsed the Coalition for Environmentally Responsible Economies Principles in 1994 and the Global Sullivan Principles in 1999.

G.M.'s report on economic, environmental and social performance for 1999-2000 represents G.M.'s seventh consecutive public accounting.

HARRY J. PEARCE
Vice Chairman, General Motors
Detroit, Oct. 23, 2000