

Monsanto

PUBLIC RELATIONS DEPARTMENT

Monsanto Company
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April 23, 1979

Ms. Karen J. Payne
4 Buena Vista Court
Urbana, Illinois 61801

Dear Ms. Payne:

Your April 15 letter to Monsanto's Director of Public Relations has been referred to me. I will respond to as many of your questions as possible.

Monsanto ceased production of 2,4,5-T in 1969 for economic reasons. We were not basic in the principle raw material, tetrachlorobenzene, and during the Vietnam war the government controlled the movement of this raw material from basic producers. Monsanto was permitted to purchase only those amounts necessary to fulfill our government contracts. The basic producers began supplying our commercial customers so that when the war began winding down, we found ourselves with no commercial market to serve.

We are funding a follow-up health study of some 228 employees and former employees of our West Virginia plant who were involved in the production of 2,4,5-T during the 1948-1969 time period.

This study is being directed by and is under the complete control of Dr. Raymond Suskind, a recognized authority on the effects of dioxin exposure and currently director of the Institute of Environmental Health at the University of Cincinnati.

Other than a dermatitis condition, known as chloracne, Monsanto's on-going health monitoring program has detected no long-term effects from our involvement with 2,4,5-T.

The company is funding this follow-up study, in part to hopefully confirm that there are no serious long-term health problems and also to assist the World Health Organization (WHO) in its attempt to find answers to the nagging medical questions surrounding exposure to trace amounts of dioxin.

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This study has been underway since mid-1977 and Dr. Suskind's findings will be submitted to the WHO and appropriate medical journals upon completion.

Regarding Agent Orange we are familiar with a 1974 report issued by the National Academy of Sciences which stated that there was no evidence of association between exposure to this herbicide and human health problems.

The major constituents of Agent Orange -- 2,4-D and 2,4,5-T (containing trace amounts of TCDD) have been the subjects of more than 40,000 scientific papers and technical articles over the past 30 years. These studies repeatedly concluded that the phenoxy herbicides were not significantly hazardous to humans or animals under normal and recommended conditions of use.

In addition to the 1974 findings of the National Academy of Sciences in recent months both the Veterans Administration and the EPA itself have stated publicly that they have not found any long-term health hazard related to exposure to Agent Orange.

To our knowledge, as of right now, we know of no current Monsanto product that contains 2,3,7,8-TCDD.

The identification of the 2,3,7,8 isomer involves a very difficult, complex analytical procedure. According to a recent WHO report, no fewer than 22 TCDD isomers have now been identified. Monsanto has an ongoing program to test for trace amounts of various isomers, but I'm not able to predict what the results might be at this time.

Orthochlorophenol is a raw material used principally by our customer in the production of Pentachlorophenol or (Penta) a wood preservative for railroad ties and utility poles, etc. Production figures are considered to be proprietary information.

For your additional information, I've attached an excellent article on dioxins from the February 12, 1979 issue of Chemical & Engineering News.

Regarding your interest in talking with an expert on the properties of 2,3,7,8-TCDD, I would suggest you contact Dr. Raymond Suskind at the Institute of Environmental Health at the University of Cincinnati.

I trust this information has been helpful.

Cordially,

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Dan R. Bishop
Dan R. Bishop

Director, Environmental Communication