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Plastic Industry Sues Over Vinyl Gas Curbs

Chicago — (AP) — Plastics industry officials today denounced and filed lawsuits contesting new federal safety standards reducing worker exposure to vinyl chloride, a gas that may cause cancer.

Assistant U. S. Labor Secretary John H. Stender announced the new Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) standards, for vinyl chloride, a chemical used in numerous plastic products, which would cover 7,500 U. S. plants with 350,000 workers.

Stender said a company that cannot meet the standards could ask for a variance or a time extension.

Todd C. Walker, of the Firestone Plastics Co., a division of the Firestone Tire & Rubber Co., said in a statement the ruling "puts the vinyl plastics industry on a collision course with economic disaster. More importantly, it throws two million jobs down the drain, according to

an economic impact study made earlier this year by Arthur Little & Co.," an industrial consulting firm.

At least two industrial groups, filed court actions. The Society of the Plastics Industry Inc. which represents more than 90 percent of vinyl chloride and polyvinyl chloride producers, and the Hooker Chemical Co., of Stamford, Conn., filed suit against the standards.

After several deaths from a rare liver cancer which were thought to be related to the handling of vinyl chloride, the Government in April lowered the limit of 500 parts per million to which workers could be exposed, to 50 parts.

The new standards state:

— In 1975, the current allowable level of 50 parts per million of vinyl chloride must drop to one part per million over any eight-hour period or five parts averaged over any period no longer than 15 minutes.

— By Jan. 1, 1976, any worker exposed to more than the limits must have a respirator. Until then, respirators are optional if levels remain less than 25 parts per million.

— Penalties for violators include a maximum \$10,000 fine and six months in prison.

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