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November 30, 1978

MEMORANDUM

TO: M. Markels, Jr., President

FROM: John Teske

SUBJECT: Study for Shipbuilders Council

Some preliminary conclusions resulting from the study for the Shipbuilders Council include:

1. It appears that ship specifications from the U. S. Navy and the Maritime Commission during the WWII years did not contain precautionary information on asbestos use. Specifications did require the use of Amosite asbestos. Documentation is being obtained from the Maritime Commission.

2. Regulatory activities relating to asbestos use in shipyards were marginal to non-existing during WWII. The U. S. Department of Labor apparently had only one industrial hygienist and there is no evidence that he conducted any shipyard inspections under the Walsh-Healey Act. Even though the Public Health Service recommended an asbestos standard in 1938, a recognized U. S. standard did not exist until the American Conference of Governmental Industrial Hygienists adopted it in 1946. In 1951, this standard was incorporated under the Walsh-Healey Act. The U. S. Navy was just getting started in industrial hygiene during WWII, setting up a new section of industrial health under the Division of Preventative Medicine in 1941.

It does not appear that the Public Health Service ever had the mission or desire to inspect shipyards for health hazards even though they did conduct asbestos studies in other manufacturing plants. The states could possibly have conducted shipyard inspections but their industrial hygiene capability was minimal in the 1940-50 period. The states and Federal Walsh-Healey inspection records for shipyards will be more fully examined to determine if inspections for asbestos exposure were ever conducted.

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