1375/76 EPA Announces Final Standards for Vinyl Chloride Emissions. Environmental News p. 1-2, Oct. 21, 1976.

Environmental Protection Agency Deputy Administrator John R. Quarles announced final adoption of standards limiting air emissions of vinyl chloride from all existing and new plants that manufacture vinyl chloride, polyvinyl chloride or ethylene dichloride by the oxychlorination process. The standards have not changed significantly since they were proposed in December 1975. They require installation of best available control technology to reduce emissions from all known "point" and "fugitive" emission sources in each plant. Incinerators, solvent absorbers, carbon absorbers, and process changes can be used to control point source emissions. Fugitive emissions can be controlled by enclosing the sources, capturing the emissions and then venting them to a control device. At all plants subject to the standards, the vinyl chloride concentration in exhaust gas emitted from the device that receives fugitive emissions cannot exceed 10 ppm. Because vinyl chloride in inplant wastewater is believed to be emitted to the atmosphere, the standard treats it as a fugitive emission and sets a 10 ppm limitation on the vinyl chloride concencration permitted in the water. Plants will have 90 days in which to meet the standard. Waivers of up to two years may be granted by the Administrator if, according to the Clean Air Act, he finds that the additional time is necessary for the installation of controls and that steps will be taken during the waiver period to assure that the health of persons will be protected from imminent endangerment.

1376/76 U.S. Chamber Cites OSHA's Own Data to Support Less Costly Noise Standard. Occupational Health & Safety Letter 6: 7, November 22, 1976.

The Chamber of Commerce of the U.S. has used OSHA's own data on behalf of its recommendation for a less costly noise protection standard than the one the Government proposed. As an alternative, says the Chamber, the workers could be adequately protected for only $42 a year per worker by allowing the use of ear muffs and other personal protective devices. The $42, it said, covered $10 for hearing protectors, $12 for noise monitoring in the shop or office, and $20 for audiometric testing for employees. The Government's proposal, says the Chamber, would establish more restrictive regulations, mandating engineering controls or physical changes. The Chamber said: "The new, or proposed, noise standard would be much more restrictive. It would require that all employers institute a 'hearing conservation program,' which consists of audiometric testing of employees, monitoring of workplace noise levels, and recordkeeping of employee exposure. It would require that employers reduce workplace noise primarily through engineering controls to 'the lowest level feasible.' "The term 'engineering controls,' as used in the noise standard, refers to engineering and other physical changes in plants and equipment. Specifically, it refers to the application of costly, temporary engineering devices (silencers, mufflers, etc.) to existing machinery and the installation throughout the work-place of such devices as noise barriers, enclosures around noisy machines (sometimes referred to as 'doghouses') and sound absorbent materials."

1377/76 FRA Proposes Safety Rule Amendments to Clarify 'Blue Flag' Requirements. Job Safety & Health Report 6: 306, November 8, 1976.

The Federal Railroad Administration proposed amendments to its safety regulations Nov. 2, designed to clarify the applicability of "blue flag" requirements to certain railroad operations and to add provisions governing locking of manually operating switches. Proposals would amend Subpart B, Title 49, Code of Federal Regulations Part 218, which governs protection of railroad workers other than yard or train crews who are engaged in activities which require them to work on, under or between railroad rolling equipment. In order to close a loophole by which operators can use train and yard crews not covered by regulations to perform the duties of workers included within the scope of the rules, FRA has proposed amending the definition of "workmen" to include train and yard crews only "when assigned to perform such work on railroad rolling equipment that is not part of the train or yard movement they have been called to operate." FRA had originally excluded these workers from coverage, believing that they were sufficiently aware of equipment movement in train yards because of their use of radio and hand signals and did not need full blue flag protection afforded to others. FRA has also proposed adding a new section 218.5(d) to define the "effective locking device" for manual switches that is required by the Federal Railroad Safety Authorization Act of 1976 to prevent movement of rolling equipment to tracks on which employes are working. Locking devices would be required to be vandal resistant, tamper-proof and locked and unlocked only by the class or craft of employe applying the lock. Remaining proposals constitute clarifying amendments for applicability of present blue signal regulations to specific areas of railroad operation including locomotive servicing tracks and car repair tracks and specify locking procedures for manually operated switches on humpyard tracks.

1396/76 Indicators of Absenteeism in a Chemical Industry Over a Ten-year Period. V. Turko. Arhiv. Hig. Rada 27: 147-166, 1976. 7 refs. (Yugoslav)

The actively employed population makes use of the medical services twice as much as the rest of the population and the rate of sickness absenteeism shows a steady rise. In a ten-year follow-up study in a chemical industry the trend in sickness absenteeism was found analogous to the one reported in other actively employed Yugoslav population. It was also noticed that oscillations in the rate of absenteeism tend to slow down and that sick absences become longer. Chronic diseases were found to prolong sick absences. In conditions of a chemical industry they also prolong reduced work capacity because of a difficult or impossible adaption to work. Chronic diseases of the locomotor system, of the nervous system and recently those of the circulation are found in increasingly younger population. Accidents, particularly traffic accidents also increase the length of absences from work. Occupational diseases were almost negligible in number. The rate of absenteeism was highest in the oldest age group. --Author's Summary in English

1397/76 Chemical Hazards in the Workplace. R. Rubenstein and J.S. Bellin. Occup. Health Nurs. 24: 16-21, October 1976. 16 refs.

The industrial nurse is in an excellent position to recognize the cause-and-effect relationship between industrial exposure and the symptoms of job-related illness, and she or he is in a crucial position to help prevent them. Many common, sometimes subtle, symptoms are the resultant of diverse chemical exposure. Such symptoms as rashes, shortness of breath, tension, anxiety, personality changes, etc. are commonly ascribed to the stresses of daily life. For the knowledgeable professional they are also markers of possible exposure to industrial chemicals. The following topics are evaluated: Toxicological principles and safety standards; Dermatites; Mild respiratory symptoms; Changes in functioning.
--Cond. from text

1398/76 Angiosarcoma of the Liver in a Rural Population. J.J. Fiechtner and C.N. Reyes. JAMA 236: 1704-1706, October 11, 1976. 19 refs.

Angiosarcoma of the liver has recently been publicized because of its association with polyvinyl chloride (PVC) polymerization workers. Four cases of this rare tumor have been observed at the Marshfield Clinic within a 29-month period. There are no factories that manufacture PVC products in the immediate area, nor were any of the victims ever involved in such manufacturing work. Thus, it is possible that other factors may be related to this cluster of the disease. --Author's abst.

1399/76 Blood Lead Levels in Adult Subjects Living in the Veneto Region, not Occupationally Exposed to Lead. P. Chiesura and D. Furlanis. Med Lavoro 67: 407-415, September/October 1976. 18 refs. (Italian)

In 173 adult subjects living in the Veneto Region (Provinces of Padua and Venice), not occupationally exposed to lead, the mean value of lead in blood was 240 ± 89 µg/l. Also, blood lead levels were significantly higher: in males (260 ± 85) than in females (201 ± 95); in town dwellers (262 ± 88) than in subjects living in the country (228 ± 92); in smokers (271 ± 84) and in drinkers (267 ± 75) than in non-smokers and non-drinkers (207 ± 80). The reasons are discussed why these differences are considered valid, at least as indicators of tendencies, although they become less significant when the single variables are isolated. A comparison is made between the data obtained here and values reported elsewhere in Europe, emphasizing the fact that the former exceed the biological values recommended as a guide by the European Community. In a further group of 55 town dwellers employed at motorway tollgates a mean value of lead in blood of 371 ± 107 µg/l was observed. --Author's Summary in English

1400/76 Hospital Admissions of Fishermen from the Fishing Grounds around the Shetland Islands. R.McN. Cadenhead. J. Soc. Occup. Med. 26: 127-131, October 1976. 7 refs.

During the period of January, 1969, to July, 1975, 125 fishermen were admitted as emergencies to the Gilbert Bain Hospital, Lerwick. They were crew members from trawlers and drifters fishing in the waters around Shetland. Their diagnoses are listed and discussed and certain prophylactic measures are recommended. --Author's Summary