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McGraw Edison

The McGraw-Edison Company was formed in 1957 as a result of a merger between Thomas A. Edison Incorporated and McGraw Electric Company. In 1985, McGraw-Edison Company was acquired by Cooper Industries, Inc.

Charles Edison, who led McGraw-Edison until the early 1960s, was Assistant Secretary and then Secretary of the Navy from 1936-1940. The Navy had begun regular medical screening of shipyard workers because of concerns about asbestosis, by 1939. Edison went on to become Governor of New Jersey from 1941-1944, at the end of which time the state legislature moved to make asbestosis a compensable occupational disease under the state workers' compensation law.

Max McGraw, CEO of McGraw Electric was President of the National Electric Manufacturers Association in 1942-43. Asbestos was widely used in electric products, including toasters such as those first introduced by McGraw Electric in the late 1920s. Nineteen McGraw Electric and McGraw-Edison patents filed between 1936-1975 described the use of asbestos in toasters, electric clothes irons, room heaters, water heaters, washing machines, and various kinds of electrical apparatus. A Cooper patent filed in 1989 for Asbestos Free Material for Gassing Current Limiting Fuses (Patent No. 4,948,828) acknowledged, "The problems with the use of asbestos are well known. Asbestos fibers and dust are a significant health hazard, and can cause, among others, the conditions known as asbestosis and mesothelioma. Asbestos dust can be generated both during manufacture and during disposal of conventional gassing spiders."

A 1964 article about Max McGraw described McGraw-Edison as a giant business empire with 40 factories employing 16,000 people in 13 states. [Max McGraw, *Fabulous Success Story—Electric Mogul Build Vast Business Empire From $500 Earned Delivering Journals of Horseback*, SIOUX CITY JOURNAL, Aug. 16, 1964].

I understand that John Myra worked at the McGraw-Edison plant in East Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania, from 1964-1991 in the press department making telephone pole hardware. Coworkers recalled that when the plant underwent asbestos abatement in the mid-1980s, there were asbestos boards on the furnaces where John Myra worked, asbestos blocks used elsewhere in production, and asbestos insulation on piping throughout the plant. Mr. Myra and his coworkers testified that McGraw-Edison did not warn them about the dangers of asbestos materials they worked with prior to the time the asbestos abatement began.

The Thomas Edison Company was a member of the National Safety Council (NSC) at least as early as 1952. Founded 1912 and based in Chicago, NSC made abundant information available for corporate members, including a monthly periodical, National Safety News, the proceedings of annual National Safety Congresses, accident prevention manuals and other publications. From the 1930s on, NSC publications carried information on asbestos, under subjects including occupational diseases, air sampling/analysis, recommended limits for airborne dust exposure, respirators, industrial ventilation, and workers' compensation laws. More general principles

were also discussed, including the importance of worker education and training in the prevention of illness and injury that harmful products can cause.

Thomas Edison Company fought a losing worker's compensation claim through appeal against an employee alleging his skin condition was contributed to by continuous immersion of his fingers into benzene used as a solvent to de-grease metal parts (Giambattista v. Thomas A. Edison, Inc., Superior Court of New Jersey, Appellate Division, 1954). McGraw-Edison promoted James Wilson, whom they had employed since 1969 as a safety engineer, to Corporate Manager for Safety and Health in 1973.

It is my opinion that McGraw Edison, an enterprise operating 40 factories in heavy industry at the time of Mr. Myra's hire, had to have had the technical expertise in worker protection to have known that asbestos was a notorious industrial dust. Given the company's likely use of asbestos in making its own products as well as the use of asbestos products throughout the East Stroudsburg plant and many others, anyone in corporate management responsible for worker protection would have had good reason to follow the published literature about the lethality of asbestos before and after 1964. OSHA regulations starting in 1971 would have further focused corporate attention on the company's new and growing legal responsibilities for worker protection against asbestos and the reasons therefore.