

FILE NAME: WR Grace (WRG)

DATE: October 21, 1964

DOC#: WRG282

DOCUMENT DESCRIPTION: 1964 Letter to T.A. Williams from Dr. Siemens regarding survey of men working in dusty trades.



OCT 25 1964

GOVERNMENT OF THE PROVINCE OF ALBERTA

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

EDMONTON, ALBERTA,

21.10.64.

Mr. T.A. Williams,
Manager Grant Industries,
Division of Eddy Match Co.,
4030 - 8th Street,
CALGARY Alberta.

Dear Mr. Williams,

In May of this year this division initiated a survey of men working in dusty trades including coal mines workers, brick tile, potteries and ceramics plants, gravel crushing, lime and cement workers, etc. in order to secure quickly a picture of problems involved and conditions leading to them. About 900 men were given breathing tests and had 14 by 17 inch chest X-rays done.

Among these men were nine working in your Zonolite plant at Calgary. Of them 7 produced forced breathing curves suggesting some degree of faulty breathing. Of these 7 the radiologist of the Baker Memorial Sanatorium at Calgary reported two as showing evidence of pulmonary fibrosis, two as having emphysema, one having both fibrosis and emphysema and two with no abnormalities. None of the nine had active tuberculosis.

This number of men with breathing abnormalities in a group of nine is most unusual and puzzling. The materials used in the production of Zonolite are not generally considered harmful except where ground asbestos is added which is done in your plant only occasionally. However, several authorities have reported pneumoconiosis resulting from exposure to mica dusts. Since vermiculite is a micaceous material this leaves us somewhat uneasy. We are of the opinion that a more detailed study of these men by a chest specialist would be desirable. This of course would involve not only the expenditure of money but also the cooperation of the men concerned. We would welcome your comments on this problem.

We would also be interested in knowing whether

you have the results of investigations similar to ours available from the other Western Canadian plants expanding vermiculite. Enquiries have gone out from this office for further information on the effects of mica dusts on the lungs and lung functions of workers.

In the meantime it would seem desirable to consider the advisability of the men in the Calgary plant wearing respirators until more definite conclusions regarding the problem can be reached.

A paragraph by our Chief Chemist, Dr. H. Buchwald, is attached, dealing with our visit to the Calgary Zonolite plant in September '64 and the examination of the dust samples collected at that time.

We wish to express our appreciation of the courtesies and help extended to us by your Supervisor of the Zonolite plant, Mr. Schuldt, and Mr. Ralph White, Engineer on your staff, at the time of our September visit.

Yours very truly,

H. Siemens, M.D.,
Director, Division of Industrial Health,
328 Administration Bldg.

P.S. An extra copy of this letter is enclosed should you require it.