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WASHINGTON, Feb. 15 -- B.F. Goodrich recommended today that new safety standards and work practices for the greater protection of employees in polyvinyl chloride production operations should be developed through regular rule-making under Section 6(b) of the Occupational Health and Safety Act.

Anton Vittone, Jr., president of B.F. Goodrich Chemical, a division of The B.F. Goodrich Company, detailed the firm's views in a statement prepared for a fact-finding hearing conducted here today by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) of the U.S. Department of Labor.

The hearing was called following the Company's reports last month that it had discovered and was investigating the possible occupational relationship of the deaths of four former polyvinyl chloride (PVC) production employees from a rare type of liver cancer, angiosarcoma.

"Our discovery of four deaths from a rare type of liver cancer among employees at our Louisville plant was, to our knowledge, the first evidence indicating a possible relationship between human angiosarcoma and chlorinated hydrocarbons used in the production of polyvinyl chloride resins," Vittone added.

The four men were employed at the Company's Louisville (Ky.) PVC operations. They were long-service employees with an average exposure of 19 years to vinyl chloride and other secondary chemicals in PVC production.

Vittone emphasized that the Company's efforts to maintain a safe working environment over the years have "resulted in decreasing levels of exposure with time."

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He said the Company independently and through the Manufacturing Chemists Association had stepped up its precautionary safety activities and research after European studies indicated that tumors could be produced in rats at exposure levels far above those prescribed for PVC plant working conditions.

Through these and other safety efforts, Vittone added, the Company has reduced exposure levels in all its PVC operations below 50 parts-per-million, equivalent to five one-thousandths of one per cent weight in the air, on a time-weighted average.

He said this improvement was made through the use of new equipment, safety education for employees and the Company's development of advanced monitoring systems.

Upon discovery of the four deaths of angiosarcoma of the liver, Vittone said he and other top corporate officers "inspected the Louisville plant to observe current work practices and exposure levels."

As a result of these inspections and consultation with medical advisors, he added, the Company concluded that "the existing situation warranted continued operation of the polyvinyl chloride facility."

The current situation was also discussed with plant employees, union representatives and government officials, he added.

The veteran chemical manufacturing executive said Goodrich "will do all it can to protect the health and safety of its employees."

He said the Company has reliable monitoring procedures which are being improved and that most interim work practices recommended recently by the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health are being implemented at the firm's five PVC plants and one vinyl chloride production facility.

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Vittone also said the Company's medical representatives are working closely with government and other medical authorities to specify the best possible medical screening and testing procedures for PVC production workers.

He also reported that the Company and its medical consultants are analyzing the results of an extensive liver function testing program among all its PVC workers.

Vittone said it would be premature to report specific results or to provide any statistical analysis of the correlation with chemical exposures until a medical review is completed.

Vittone said the Company has found no other cases of angiosarcoma in its preliminary review of available medical records of deceased employes and retirees from the Louisville plant and the Company's other polyvinyl chloride and vinyl chloride monomer production facilities. This review is continuing.

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