T. B. BONNEY

PITTSBURGH - 7

DR. W. J. BOVARD

VANCOUVER OPERATIONS

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CONFIDENTIAL

RE: ASBESTOS

Regarding our recent phone conversation, I believe there are convincing reasons for us to find substitutes for asbestos. You are certainly aware of the poor publicity this material has gotten in recent months. Organized labor is not only aware of this, but they have contributed to it. Furthermore, the fact of asbestos being a carcinogen places it in a separate category complete with emotional overtones.

Alcoa has had a long-standing industrial hygiene policy of permitting the use of any material so long as adequate control measures are taken to keep employee exposures within safe limits. However, experience has shown us that with long-term use of a hazardous material, the users often become careless. Maintenance of preventive measures can only be accomplished by continuous surveillance.

Deterioration of environmental control measures are not too much of a problem with materials such as hydrogen chloride and caustic soda whose presence in excessive concentrations in the working environment are apparent and whose harmful effects are immediate. Rather, the most serious potential problems lie with those materials whose harmful effects are long-delayed and whose presence is not apparent. Asbestos is in this latter category. We believe that it is in the interest of our employee's health to eliminate the use of such materials whenever possible.

In the case of asbestos we have additional legal and economic incentives to look for substitute materials. The OSHA asbestos standard is a demanding one. No action level has been defined; the mere presence of fibers (regardless of concentration) in the working environment makes the standard applicable. Where airborne fibers are present we must at least do air sampling and analysis and provide special medical examinations - none of which come without cost. Furthermore, all violation of asbestos exposure limits are classified as "serious violations".

As we look at the overall situation, we find strong incentives to find suitable substitutes for asbestos - as many of our plants already have. In doing so, we will assure ourselves of a healthy working environment, eliminate the very real possibility of violating an OSHA standard (whose consequence can be costly engineering control) and eliminate the costs of special medical examinations and industrial hygiene evaluations.

T. B. BONNEY

TBB:mm

cc: L. L. Haisch - Vancouver



ALCOA