

Continued from Page 6

recommending standards for occupational exposure to a number of chemicals, and has published what it calls "criteria documents" for more than 20 substances.

The chemicals and substances include lead, asbestos, beryllium, trichloroethylene, toluene, ozone, several ketones and alkyl benzenes, sulfur dioxide and ammonia. Public hearings are to be held on all of these to develop stricter standards of exposure.

In addition, the proposed standards for lead, beryllium, trichloroethylene and toluene call for establishing what is called an "action level." That means that when workers are exposed to one-half of the permissible level, employers would have to give medical examinations to check for possible effects of exposure.

What seems to run through much of what is being learned about cancer-causing agents is the irony that technical advances often bring with them hidden hazards. The convenience of the spray can for hair sprays, for example, depended on the stability of the chemicals called fluorocarbons. Now many scientists believe that fluorocarbons are drifting up into the atmosphere and destroying the protective layer of ozone, which screens out ultraviolet rays that can produce skin cancer.

The IARC study of suspect chemicals conveys the feeling that none is safe. In the past, for instance, insecticides containing arsenic — another substance on the list — were used in the vineyards of Germany and France, exposing the laborers in the vineyards to a cancer-causing chemical.