

Chief
Industry-wide Studies Branch

August 22, 1977

Thru: Chief
Industrial Hygiene Section
Industrial Hygienist, IHS

Walk-through Survey of the Moyer Chemical Company, San Jose, California

PURPOSE: To observe the pesticide formulation process at this plant, and possible sources of exposure in relation to the proposed IWS pesticide project, as well as to monitor an ongoing contract by UBTL.

DATE OF SURVEY: June 6, 1977

DATE OF REPORT: August 22, 1977

PERSON(S) CONDUCTING SURVEY: Ms. Jane Brown, Industrial Hygienist
Ms. Jan Handke, Public Health Analyst

PERSON PREPARING REPORT: Ms. Jane Brown

CONTACTS AT PLANT: Mr. Kenneth O'Connell, Operations Manager
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DESCRIPTION OF PLANT: This plant is a small pesticide formulation plant which was begun 31 years ago. During peak production eight people are employed as formulators. This number drops to two or three formulators during the winter months. There is only one shift of employees here, and shifts run until the work is finished. Employees occasionally work Saturdays. Preemployment physicals and monthly cholinesterase tests are provided by the company. No other medical services are provided.

DESCRIPTION OF PROCESS: Both liquid and solid pesticides are mixed at this plant. The liquid mixing operation is done outside with no shelter. Mixing is done in open tanks, with no hooding or ventilation, by hand. Electric stirrers are used. There were no lids on the tubs at the time of this survey; the liquid mix operation was running at the time. Employees in this portion of the plant were wearing neither respirators nor any other type of protective equipment.

Solid pesticides are mixed indoors at this plant. Different types of systems are used for different pesticides. Some of the mixing equipment used here had had duct work installed for ventilation of dust generated from the operation. As the processes with the ventilation equipment were not in operation at the time of this survey no comments can be made about the efficiency or use of this ventilation. This area, however, was much cleaner than the liquid mixing area, which may have been due to the fact that it was not in use at this time.

One system in the solid pesticide area was in operation at the time of the walk-through. The system was a dispensing operation used for bagging solid pesticides. There were three employees running the system, two of which were wearing disposable respirators. This system was not ventilated although a fan was positioned so as to blow the contaminant away from the employees. As we walked through this area, severe eye irritation was experienced by two or more of the survey party. Difficulty in breathing was also experienced.

Several types of pesticides which are not formulated at this plant are sold through the plant. These pesticides, as well as Moyer's own compounds, are housed in two storage sheds, each of which is similar in size to the solid mixing building. Three large doors in each of these three buildings were constantly kept open.

It should be noted that this plant was in the process of carrying out a mandatory cleanup operation, under the auspices of the Environmental Protection Agency. Prior to this time, the spills incurred at this plant were allowed to run-off into the surrounding grounds, with no attempts to clean them up, or prevent seepage into the grounds. As a result, pesticides were getting into surrounding water systems. At the time of this survey, a concrete revetment was under completion which was intended to prevent this situation by catching the spills.

It should also be noted that difficulties in communications prevented the discussion of raw materials being used at this plant. Several containers of diacetone alcohol, zinc sulfate, and lime sulfur were noted, but, further information of this type was difficult to obtain at this time. Such information is available to NIOSH personnel through John Solook, in Morgantown, as he is currently conducting industrial hygiene surveys at this plant for NIOSH.

Jane Brown

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