

PB89238208

Statement of

Dr. Joseph K. Wagoner, Director
Division of Field Studies and Clinical Investigations
National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health
Center for Disease Control
Department of Health, Education, and Welfare

Before the
Subcommittee on Consumer Protection and Finance
House Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce

July 11, 1975

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE	1. REPORT NO.	2.	3. Recipient's Accession No. PB89 23820815
4. Title and Subtitle NIOSH Testimony by J. K. Wagoner, July 11, 1975		5. Report Date 75/07/11	
7. Author(s) NIOSH		8. Performing Organization Rept. No.	
9. Performing Organization Name and Address NIOSH		10. Project/Task/Work Unit No.	
12. Sponsoring Organization Name and Address		13. Type of Report & Period Covered	
15. Supplementary Notes		14.	
<p>18. Abstract (Limit: 200 words) This testimony before the Subcommittee on Consumer Protection and Finance concerned the recommending of occupational exposure levels for toxic substances and other activities of NIOSH. In fulfilling the responsibilities given to it, NIOSH has transmitted recommended standards to the Department of Labor concerning 26 substances, including asbestos (1332214), arsenic (7440382), mercury (7439976) and vinyl-chloride (75014). NIOSH annually distributed 20,000 copies of a list of about 17,000 toxic substances with information on their animal lethality, carcinogenic, teratogenic, and mutagenic effects and routes of human exposure. Additional information is being sought on 1500 of these substances which are reported to produce tumors in animals. The Division of Field Studies and Clinical Investigations has undertaken about 35 industrywide studies to determine the long term effects of exposure to low levels of substances, particularly those suspected of causing cancer. Such investigations support the need for pretesting programs that yield experimental evidence of the effects of chemicals on animals prior to commercial production.</p>			
<p>17. Document Analysis a. Descriptors</p> <p>b. Identifiers/Open-Ended Terms NIOSH-Publication, NIOSH-Author, NIOSH-Testimony, FINKLEA-J-F, Worker-health, Toxic-materials, Teratogens, Carcinogens, Mutagens, Occupational-exposure</p> <p>c. COSATI Field/Group</p>			
18. Availability Statement	19. Security Class (This Report)	21. No. of Pages	
	22. Security Class (This Page)	22. Price	

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

I am Dr. Joseph K. Wagoner, Director of the Division of Field Studies and Clinical Investigations, a program in the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), Center for Disease Control, Department of Health, Education, and Welfare.

When Congress passed the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970, NIOSH was given authority to conduct occupational safety and health research. Among the specific responsibilities of the Institute are to develop criteria recommending occupational exposure levels for toxic substances, publish annually a Toxic Substances List, and conduct and publish industrywide studies on the effect of chronic or low-level exposure to industrial materials, processes, and stresses.

In fulfillment of these responsibilities, NIOSH has transmitted recommended standards to the Department of Labor on 26 substances, including asbestos, arsenic, mercury and vinyl chloride. The Institute distributes annually 20,000 copies of a list of approximately 17,000 toxic substances, with information on their animal lethality, carcinogenic, teratogenic and mutagenic effects, and routes to human exposure. We are seeking additional information on 1500 of these substances which are reported to produce tumors in animals.

The Division of Field Studies and Clinical Investigations has undertaken approximately 35 industrywide studies to determine the long-term effects of exposure to low levels of substances, particularly those suspected of causing cancer. Until recently, most of the animal testing for

carcinogenic action of chemicals was not performed until they were suspected or proved to be carcinogenic in man. Recently, however, substances such as bis(chloromethyl)ether and vinyl chloride were first shown to produce tumors in animals and subsequently shown to produce the same kind of tumors in man. Similarly, anesthetic gases were first shown to produce embryogenic effects in animals. Now there is legitimate concern that related adverse effects may occur among surgical operating room workers.

Such investigations support the need for pretesting programs that yield experimental evidence of the effects of chemicals on animals prior to commercial production. When chemicals are introduced into the environment without adequate pretesting, their toxicity may not become evident until it is too late to reverse their health effects. Many diseases, especially cancer, do not become evident for 20 or 30 years after initial exposure to the causitive agent.

Mr. Chairman, I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss my work and to answer any questions you or other Members of the Subcommittee may have.

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