

## INDUSTRIAL HYGIENE WALK-THROUGH REPORT

**PLANT NAME:** Westex Talc Inc. Tumble Down Mountain Mines (Milwhite Talc Co., Inc.)

**LOCATION:** Van Horn, Texas

**PURPOSE:** The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) in cooperation with the Mining Enforcement and Safety Administration (MESA) has underway a preliminary study of the talc mining and milling industry. As part of this study, NIOSH is conducting walk-through surveys to compile necessary data in effort to characterize talc composition.

**NIOSH PERSONNEL:** Paul L. Johnson

### **PLANT HISTORY AND PROCESS:**

The Westex Talc Inc., Tumble Down Mountain (TDM) mines have been producing talc ore since 1970. All mines of Westex Talc Inc. are open-pit using bench quarry techniques. Primary access to and from the mines is by a 5 to 6 mile dirt roadway.

There are 2 connecting mines presently operating at this 40 acre location. These are designated by the company as TDM light and TDM dark. Both mines alternate their 3 employees as drivers, loaders, blasters and track drill operators. Mining operations are conducted during an 8 to 10 hour day, 6 days per week. The ore, loaded onto Euclid trucks, is stockpiled at the nearby mill. Stockpiled ore hauled to the mill consist of 250 to 300 tons per day. All ore to be milled is processed through the Milwhite Company located in Van Horn.

**HEALTH HAZARDS:** Include potentially excessive dust exposures,

### **PERSONNEL RECORDS:**

Personnel records date back to 1971. They are complete including Social Security numbers and work histories. There is a high turnover of employees in all talc facilities in the Texas area.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. Roadways to and from the mines should be wetted down or graded on a regular basis to help eliminate dust hazards.
2. Respirator protection should be mandatory for all employees working in dusty areas.

3. The Willson number 8D or DG8, filter number R670 is not adequate for controlling talc dust particles. It is recommended that NIOSH approved dust-respirators be used in dusty areas.
4. Equipment such as first-aid materials, hard hats, protective footwear, and safety glasses are mandatory (Section 57.15, Personal Protection, 30 CFR, Chapter I, Mine Standards).
5. A communication system (telephone, CB radio, etc.) should be provided and maintained at the mines for emergency use.