

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH
CINCINNATI, OHIO 45202

HEALTH HAZARD EVALUATION DETERMINATION
REPORT NO. 73-56-126

EASTEX PACKAGING, INCORPORATED
MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE

MARCH 1974

I. TOXICITY DETERMINATION

Based upon information obtained during an investigation conducted on October 31, 1973, it was determined that printing ink and/or adhesives are not toxic to employees as normally encountered in the finishing department operations. This determination was based upon (1) results of interviews conducted with forty (40) employees in the alleged hazard area, with no adverse health effects being reported, and (2) visual observations of the operations and work practices, which failed to reveal the potential for employee exposure to inks and/or adhesives via inhalation or direct contact under normal operations.

II. DISTRIBUTION AND AVAILABILITY OF DETERMINATION REPORT

Copies of this Determination Report are available upon request from the Hazard Evaluation Services Branch, NIOSH, U.S. Post Office Building, Room 508, 5th and Walnut Streets, Cincinnati, Ohio 45202. Copies have been sent to:

- a) Eastex Packaging, Incorporated, Memphis, Tennessee
- b) Authorized Representative of Employees
- c) U.S. Department of Labor - Region IV
- d) NIOSH - Region IV

For purposes of informing the 70 potentially affected employees, the employer will promptly "post" the Determination Report in a prominent place(s) near where affected employees work for a period of thirty (30) calendar days.

III. INTRODUCTION

Section 20(a)(6) of the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970, 29 U.S.C. 669(a)(6) authorizes the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare, following a written request by any employer or authorized representative of employees, to determine whether any substance normally found in the place of employment has potentially toxic effects in such concentrations as used or found.

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health received such a request from an authorized representative of employees regarding potential exposure to printing ink and/or adhesives in the finishing department of the Eastex Packaging, Incorporated in Memphis, Tennessee.

IV. HEALTH HAZARD EVALUATION

On October 31, 1973, NIOSH Representative Harry L. Markel, Jr., conducted an investigation of the finishing department, located in the main building of Eastex Packaging, Incorporated. Pertinent information regarding the company's operation was provided by the Plant Engineer/Safety Officer, and the Company Personnel Officer.

Eastex Packaging, Incorporated is a manufacturer of folding cardboard cartons. In the finishing department, the area of primary concern, previously cut and printed cartons are automatically folded and glued. During normal operations some seventy (70) employees, distributed between two (2) shifts, are employed in this area. The cartons are handled at two phases of the operation. "Feeders" position the unassembled boxes by hand in the folding/gluing machine and the "catchers" remove the finished boxes, once assembled. The machine itself is controlled by the glue machine operator.

The Health Hazard Evaluation Request was prompted by the recent compensation awarded a previously terminated employee. The employee alleged that allergic conjunctivitis resulted from occupational exposure.

Investigation of the finishing department and personal interviews with employees produced the following information:

- (1) the cartons are printed in another section of the plant with apparently no direct contact with the printing ink by employees in the finishing department.
- (2) adhesives used in the area are in liquid form, water base except for one glue, and automatically dispensed.
- (3) some employees who handle cartons wear gloves.
- (4) management stated that there has been no recent change in operation.
- (5) interviews with forty (40) employees (20-first shift, 20-second shift) identified two employees who reported an occasional skin problem. However, they felt it was not probably not job-related. The remainder of those interviewed reported no problems related to respiratory conditions, eye irritation or skin irritation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Exit interviews were conducted with representatives of management and labor. The only recommendation made was related to potential skin irritation. Since some employees in the area wear gloves, the possibility exists that any glue, etc., on the cartons could be retained on the gloves, and ultimately transferred to the facial area, thus causing irritation. A recommendation was made that the feeders and catchers be advised of such possibilities and steps taken for routine changing and/or cleaning of the gloves.

V. AUTHORSHIP

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