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U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
EPA Docket Center
Docket ID No. EPA-HQ-OAR-2017-0427
Mail Code 28221T
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20460

Re: Docket ID No. EPA-HQ-OAR-2017-0427 -- National Emission Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants for Asbestos: Request for Approval of an Alternative Work Practice for Asbestos-Cement Pipe Replacement

The Laborers' Health and Safety Fund of North America (LHSFNA) is a labor-management non-profit affiliated with the Laborers' International Union of North America (LIUNA) which focuses on improving health and safety for members of the union and their signatory contractors. LIUNA represents approximately 500,000 men and women in the U.S. and Canada who primarily work in construction. Many LIUNA members work in the pipeline sector and are often called on to repair or replace asbestos-cement (A/C) pipe. LIUNA members also do asbestos abatement work and have suffered from illnesses resulting from exposure to asbestos. As a result, the LHSFNA has a significant interest in this proposed action.

Repair or replacement of A/C pipe can present a significant risk of asbestos exposure for workers¹. The pipe is often being replaced because it is in poor condition and thus, the asbestos could become friable and airborne. A/C pipe generally contains about 12-15% asbestos. There are an estimated 400,000 miles of A/C pipe in the U.S.²

While the proposed Alternative Work Practice (AWP) appears to reduce the risk of exposure and is comparable to existing techniques under the National Emission Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants (NESHAP) that require no visible dust, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), which also has jurisdiction over exposures to asbestos in the workplace, uses a numerical standard of 0.1 fiber/cc. The industry claims, "studies show that city

¹ Kumagai, S., Nakachi, S., Kurumatani, N., Nakagiri, S., & Kataoka, A. (1993). Estimation of asbestos exposure among workers repairing asbestos-cement pipes used for conduits. *Sangkyo Igaku*, 35(3), 178-87.

² Sullivan, D. (2017, August 11). Asbestos cement pipe: Why it's a problem and how trenchless can fix it. *Trenchlesspedia*. Retrieved from <https://www.trenchlesspedia.com/asbestos-cement-pipe-why-its-problem-and-how-trenchless-can-fix-it/2/3403>

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workers replacing asbestos-infused plumbing with this method's exposure levels were well below the permissible exposure level of 0.1 fiber structures per cubic centimeter of air" (Sullivan, 2017). Yet, there has been no published data to validate these claims. Contractors using this AWP will need to know not only whether they are complying with the NESHAP but also with the OSHA standard³. Asbestos fibers are microscopic in size and even when complying with a no visible dust standard, workers could be exposed to significant levels of asbestos.

The LHSFNA believes that prior to proceeding with approval of this AWP, the EPA should commission air sampling of exposures to asbestos using this new AWP to determine actual exposure levels for workers when using this work practice. If workers are exposed to significant levels of asbestos (even though there may be no visible dust), additional work practices and precautions should be required to further reduce exposure levels. Mere compliance with a no visible dust standard should not be automatically construed as a safe work practice and may, in fact, be in violation of the OSHA standard. Only air sampling using both Phase Contrast Microscopy (PCM) and Transmission Electron Microscopy (TEM) can determine that. Asbestos is too dangerous to rely on an inadequate and outdated standard. No visible dust does not mean an absence of hazards to either workers or the environment.

³ Fairfax, R.E., (2007, May 29). Standard Interpretations: Requirements for tapping or tying-in to asbestos containing cement water pipes for construction. Retrieved from: <https://www.osha.gov/laws-regs/standardinterpretations/2007-05-29>