

Barbara Klieforth



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

DEC 12

OFFICE OF THE
SCIENCE ADVISOR

Jennifer Joy Wilson
President and CEO
National Stone, Sand and Gravel Association
1605 King Street
Alexandria, VA 22314

Dear Ms. Wilson:

Thank you for your letter of September 29, 2006, to Stephen L. Johnson, Administrator, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), concerning asbestos and other similar minerals. The Administrator has asked me to respond on his behalf. I am glad to provide this follow-up to the interim response sent to you on November 13, 2006.

I appreciate your recognition of the Agency's commitment to science-based decision-making to protect human health and the environment. This commitment extends to all potential pollutants, including asbestos and other similar minerals. In light of the current state of the science, the Agency believes its current policies provide the appropriate level of public health protection.

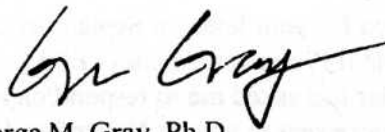
Your letter recommended a national study to address some of the scientific questions you raised concerning the measurement, health effects, and potential risks associated with these materials. There are uncertainties inherent in any assessment of potential risks, including those associated with mineral fibers or structures. Development of a more thorough understanding regarding the relative potencies of different mineral fibers, especially with respect to fiber dimension, habit of formation and mineral content, will allow EPA to better address these uncertainties.

Currently, EPA is working with the National Institute for Environmental Health Sciences as it considers possible National Toxicology Program studies that may contribute to better understanding potential health effects and risks of mineral fibers and structures of potential concern. In addition, EPA has a number of ongoing activities that may address uncertainties in the current risk methods used for asbestos exposures. For example, EPA's Integrated Risk Information System (IRIS) is developing a toxicological review for noncancer effects of asbestos. Also, the Office of Solid Waste and Emergency Response's interim method to assess asbestos-related carcinogenic risks, which has been under development for several years, may help in this area as well. Finally, EPA has announced a reassessment of the asbestos cancer health assessment by the IRIS program. All of these activities will go to EPA's Science Advisory Board for review.

It is EPA's policy to have major scientific and technical work reviewed by independent experts. Once it appears that there is adequate new scientific information to effectively do so, a subcommittee of EPA's Science Policy Council will consider whether to do a national study or undertake a "State of the Science" colloquium or workshop with our federal partners, perhaps under the auspices of an outside-EPA entity such as the Health Effects Institute (HEI) or the National Academy of Sciences (NAS). Aside from fully assessing the state of the science on asbestos and other similar minerals, such an effort could also help guide EPA and others' future research efforts to inform science-based decision-making related to these materials.

Once again, thank you for your letter. If you have any questions, please contact me or have your staff contact Dr. Kevin Teichman in my office at (202) 564 6620.

Best regards,



George M. Gray, Ph.D.
EPA Science Advisor

