

U.S. Department of Labor

Assistant Secretary for
Occupational Safety and Health
Washington, D.C. 20210

Asbestos *EW*

**OSHA ACTIVITY ON ASBESTOS SCARE**

Jan 22 evening OSHA's Chicago North Area Office in Des Plaines, Illinois received a complaint from a worker at Interstate Brands in Schiller Park, Illinois. He said that workers were exposed to asbestos.

He alleged that a week prior, they were asked to remove insulation from a boiler located in the boiler room, next to the cafeteria. When the employees questioned whether there was asbestos, their supervisor stated that the material had been tested and did not contain asbestos, so keep removing the insulation.

These employees had done similar work in the past and this type of insulation had contained asbestos. They secured portions of the insulation and sent it to a lab. the test results indicated the insulation contained 1-5% chrysolite and 10-15% amosite, both types of asbestos.

Jan 23, the same worker called OSHA again and was on the phone with his chief steward as well. The employees told OSHA that the boiler was still in the area with the insulation attached. They were concerned about removal of evidence and their exposure to the asbestos. The complainant also stated that there was a chocolate mixing vat located in the area and he was concerned about contamination of the chocolate.

Jan 23 afternoon, OSHA Chicago North office received a call from EPA asking them to respond to a complaint they received about these exposures. OSHA began its investigation at the facility. Samples were taken of the insulation material and have been sent to a lab. Photos of the area were also taken.

Late Jan 26 evening, OSHA hot-line received a call from Illinois EPA, they were sealing the facility due to asbestos contamination. The Illinois EPA was concerned that the asbestos fibers had gotten into the ventilation system and was posing a significant risk.

Jan 27 morning, OSHA continued its investigation. The Illinois EPA was on-site.

Illinois EPA ended up not sealing the plant, the company shut down voluntarily.

Illinois Public Health Dept signed a voluntary agreement with plant, they agreed to recall all snack foods that were produced during the week and half time period.

Illinois AG is investigating potential criminal violations of environmental laws.

Insulation material was placed in a wheelbarrow and rolled to the dumpster, thru food production (possibly contaminating the food product).

We are opening a "whistleblower" case there because the worker who first complained claims that his life is being threatened.

We have inspected this facility previously, but have found no serious violations.

Interstate Bakeries is the parent company, located in Kansas City, Missouri. They are the largest wholesale baker in the US.

Asbestos scare spurs snack recall

By Nancy Millman
STAFF WRITER

In one of the largest food recalls in state history, the maker of Hostess snack foods on Tuesday recalled, because of possible asbestos contamination, several million food items baked at a northwest suburban plant.

At the same time, the Illinois attorney general's office said it is investigating whether the company, Interstate Bakeries Corp., may have violated state law in a recent asbestos removal project that may have contaminated the bakery, which the state Environmental Protection Agency has until further notice.

Interstate Bakeries, based in Kansas City, Mo., is the nation's biggest baker and is the parent company of the Hostess line of snacks, such as Twinkies.

HoHo's and Dolly Madison cakes, some of the best-selling brands in the country.

The bakery in northwest suburban Schiller Park is the big producer of Twinkies in the nation and supplies Illinois and 20 other states.

Illinois officials said they are concerned that all food made at the plant between Jan. 11 and Jan. 25 may be contaminated with asbestos.

There have been no reports of illnesses related to the consumption of Hostess products, officials said.

Although there is no conclusive evidence, some studies have linked repeated consumption of asbestos to cancer of the esophagus and the gastrointestinal tract.

Asbestos, a mineral used in fireproofing, has been found to be a carcinogen, and is particularly harmful to the lungs.

The recall is small compared with last summer's 25 million-pound recall of ground beef by Hudson Foods in Nebraska because of the possibility of E. coli bacteria contamination. But officials said it is one of the largest in the state's history.

The recall came after four days of urging by the Illinois Department of Public Health and the Illinois EPA, said Tom Schafer, a

The state agencies, responding to a tip on Friday, tested the plant for asbestos that day and found "a very high level," Schafer said. The state has not yet done any testing on products, but said it is concerned that fibers could have been mixed into the product from contaminated packaging.

Illinois Atty. Gen. Jim Ryan is planning to file a civil lawsuit against the company on Wednesday, "asking the court to make sure that before the plant reopens it is cleaned up properly," said spokesman Dan Curry.

Additionally, the state is investigating whether actions at the bakery were in violation of a new state law that makes it a felony to improperly remove asbestos, Curry said.

Hostess snacks recalled

The bakery in northwest suburban Schiller Park is the biggest producer of Twinkies in the nation and supplies Illinois and 20 other states.

Recalled snacks listed in the code

Hostess products recalled	Expiration date
HoHo's	1/29-2/13
Twinkies	1/22-2/6
Light Twinkies	1/22-2/6
Cupcakes	1/22-2/6
Light Cup	1/22-2/6
Light Brownie	1/22-2/6
Chocolicious	1/22-2/6
Oat Bran Muffin	1/22-2/6
Valentine	1/22-2/6
Hoppers	1/22-2/6
Dessert Cup	1/22-2/6
Fruit Pies	1/22-2/6
Honey Bun	1/22-2/6
Dolly Madison Cupcakes	1/22-2/6

Source: Interstate Brands Corporation

Chicago Tribune

State officials learned that an old boiler—with asbestos in its insulation—had been removed from the plant on Jan. 11 by two plant workers who were not certified for asbestos removal.

The workers did not wear protective clothing, did not seal the boiler room and rolled the asbestos through the plant in an open cart before placing it in a Dumpster outside, the health department's Schafer said.

"Everything that could have gone wrong [in removing asbestos] did go wrong," he said. "We believe the

Interstate acknowledges that "the removal of the insulation was inappropriate relative to EPA regulations," said Mark Dirkes, senior vice president of corporate marketing at Interstate.

But he said the plant manager who ordered the boiler's removal—in response to a recommendation from a fire marshal—was not aware there was asbestos present. The company said it just learned of the problem last Friday and would not comment on whether disciplinary action had been taken.

Even after the asbestos problem was discovered, there are questions about how the company responded to the situation, especially after state officials found contamination last week.

The state health department said the company was forced into the recall. Schafer said the company only agreed to it when the state EPA said it would seal the plant Monday night, and the health department said it was embargoing all its products as of Tuesday.

Like the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, which forced Hudson Foods into a recall, the state health department has no recall power. Schafer said if Interstate hadn't recalled the products, the department would have told the public not to consume them.

Another Interstate official, vice president and general counsel Ray Sandy Sutton, denied that the company had been informed last week about the health department's tests. He said the company's own tests showed no contamination.

And Dirkes said the company believes "the product is safe." He said the company recalled the products voluntarily only to "alleviate any concerns the public may have."

Physicians said that there isn't conclusive evidence on the medical risks.

"The evidence that asbestos is a disease-causing agent when you eat it is meager," said Dr. David Cugell, a specialist in lung diseases and asbestos at Northwestern Memorial Hospital.

"The real problem comes when you inhale it."

At Cook County Hospital, Dr. Peter Orri, a physician of occupational medicine, said studies have been contradictory regarding asbestos and gastrointestinal cancer.

"Nevertheless, no individual should worry that they would be poisoned because they ate Twinkies," Orri said. "It is highly unlikely that anybody will develop a disease from this incident."

But what about the plant's 200 workers who may have been exposed to asbestos?

Chicago
Tribune
1/28/88

that a recall might be ordered, a company official said.

At the area's 185 Jewel stores, managers were instructed to pull off all of the Hostess products.

Tribune staff writers Diego Contreras and Sallie L. Gainer contributed to this report.

39 immediate harm, said Robert Ill, president of Bakery, Confectionery and Tobacco Workers local 1.

At Dominick's Finer Foods headquarters in suburban Northbrook, the first rumors of a recall read by midmorning and at noon all 108 stores were alerted.

Wednesday, January 28, 1998

Hostess recalls pastries

Asbestos contamination feared

By MICHELLE ROBERTS

STAFF WRITER

At least a million packages of some of America's most-loved snack cakes were ordered off store shelves in 21 states Tuesday amid concerns they may have been tainted with asbestos at a suburban Chicago plant.

Fourteen types of Hostess-brand snacks—including Twinkies, Cup-cakes, Ho-Hos and Honey Buns—were recalled Tuesday after state health officials discovered the company had illegally removed asbestos from its Schiller Park plant. The recalled pastries all have a "57" in a code that accompanies the expiration date.

Interstate Brands Corp. closed the plant—which employs between 800 and 700 people—after officials threatened to shut it down Monday, company officials said. The Twinkie was invented in Schiller Park in 1930.

The Kansas City, Mo.-based company said Tuesday it believes the products are safe, but its Hostess cake division is voluntarily recalling them.

The snack cakes may have been

after insulation was removed on Jan. 11 and 12 from a boiler room by employees who were not certified to do such a job.

The state is investigating whether asbestos fibers were tracked by foot and "blown through the plant," said Illinois Environmental Protection Agency spokesman Dennis McMurray.

A state law passed this year makes it a felony to improperly remove asbestos, a fibrous material known to cause cancer and other health problems. None of the required procedures were followed at the Schiller Park plant, officials said.

"They illegally removed asbestos from their plant," said Tom Schafer, spokesman for the Illinois Department of Public Health. "And as a result, they put

their employees at risk and this product at risk."

Interstate Brands Corp. Vice President Sandy Sutton denied that the company intentionally broke the law.

"It's not true," Sutton said. The insulation "was removed inadvertently and it was found out later to be asbestos."



snack pastries could have been contaminated when the insulation was being removed from the boiler room. He said that if some of the asbestos became airborne, it could have tainted pastries that were open to the air on a conveyor belt.

"We believe all the recall products are safe and have met all government standards," Sutton said. "Asbestos is not generally considered to be an ingestion hazard."

But state officials disagreed. Efforts are under way to test the snack cakes and their packaging for contamination.

"Not much is known about the health risk of ingesting food contaminated with asbestos," Schafer

said, adding that some studies have linked repeated consumption to cancer of the esophagus and the gastrointestinal tract.

Schafer said officials are concerned inhalation of asbestos fibers could occur if the snack cake packaging were opened.

Illinois Attorney General Jim Ryan is expected to file a civil lawsuit against the company today to ensure it "follows the proper procedures before it reopens," said spokesman Dan Curry.

A State Police investigation is also under way to determine if the company will be charged with violating criminal statutes governing asbestos removal.

"We have no idea how long we'll be closed," Sutton said. "We're hoping less than a week."

But state environment and health department officials predicted it could take longer.

Wages, benefits rise 3.3% in '97

WASHINGTON—Americans' wages and benefits rose in 1997 at the fastest clip in four years, good news for workers but a troubling sign of inflationary pressures down the road. The Labor Department reported Tuesday that its Employment Cost Index, considered the best measure of changes in wages and benefit costs, rose 3.3 percent last year, an acceleration from gains of 2.9 percent in 1996 and 2.7 percent in 1995.

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Twinkies, HoHo's Are Recalled

CHICAGO (AP) -- More than a dozen types of Hostess snacks, including HoHo's and Twinkies, sold in 21 states are being recalled because of possible asbestos contamination.

Kansas City, Mo.-based Interstate Brands Corp. said today it believes the products are safe, but its Hostess cake division is voluntarily recalling them. There are concerns they may have been affected by asbestos fibers in insulation removed from a boiler at the company's suburban Schiller Park plant Jan. 11.

Asbestos is a fibrous substance known to cause cancer and other health problems.

The Illinois Environmental Protection Agency had planned to close the plant Monday night when it was shut down voluntarily.

"Everything they had in their plant or on their docks has been embargoed," said Tom Schafer, a spokesman for the Illinois Public Health Department. "It is being held."

The products were sold in the central United States and have a "57" code as part of the expiration date on the package, the company said. Only products with the "57" code are subject to the recall.

The recall includes 13 Hostess products plus Dolly Madison cupcakes, almost all of which have expiration dates ranging from Jan. 22 through Feb. 6. HoHo's included have expiration dates ranging from Jan. 29 to Feb. 13. The products can be returned to the place they were purchased for a complete refund.

The incident is being investigated by state and federal officials, including the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration.

Nancy Quick, director of OSHA's Des Plaines office, said the agency received a complaint of possible employee exposure to asbestos and began its inspection last Friday. The agency has not yet received results of tests to determine if anyone was exposed to asbestos.

Interstate Brands is the nation's largest wholesale baker. The snack brands involved in the recall are Dolly Madison Cupcakes and the following Hostess products: HoHo's, Twinkies, Light Twinkies, Cupcakes, Light Cup, Light Brownie, Chocolicious, Muffin-Oat Bran, Valentine, Hoppers, Dessert Cup, Fruit Pies and Honey Bun.

Schafer said the company told health officials that the states involved are: Arkansas, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, West Virginia and Wisconsin.

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Updated 7:04 AM ET January 28, 1998

Twinkies Recalled for Possible Asbestos

CHICAGO (Reuters) - Consumers have been asked to return Hostess Twinkies, Cupcakes and other snacks marked with expiration dates beginning last Thursday because of possible asbestos contamination.

Interstate Bakeries Corp. said asbestos fibers from an insulation removal operation at its Schiller Park, Illinois, bakery could have "affected" the products.

The company said that the recalled products were safe and that asbestos was "not generally considered to be an ingestion hazard."

The products from the facility were identifiable by the number "57" underneath the date code. Products with another number were made at other bakeries and did not face recall.

The Schiller Park facility was closed until tests are completed to determine whether asbestos fibers are present from the Jan. 11 cleanup of a boiler.

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Twinkies Recalled for Possible Asbestos cleanup of a boiler.

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The recall covered Hostess Twinkies, Light Twinkies, Cupcakes, Light Cupcakes, Light Brownies, Choccolicious, Oat Bran Muffins, Valentines, Hoppers, Desert Cups, Fruit Pies, Honey Buns and Dolly Madison Cupcakes with expiration dates beginning Jan. 22 and ending Feb. 6. Hostess HoHo's with expirations between Jan. 29 and Feb. 13 were also recalled.

Consumers were told to return products to the store for a refund.

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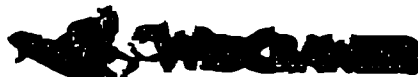
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