



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

DEC 29 2003

EPA-SAB-09-004

THE ADMINISTRATOR

Dr. Agnes Kane
Chair, Asbestos Committee
Science Advisory Board
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20460

Dear Dr. Kane:

Thank you for writing to convey the results of the Science Advisory Board Asbestos Committee's consultation on the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's *Proposed Approach for Estimation of Bin-specific Cancer Potency Factors for Inhalation Exposure to Asbestos*. The Committee's comments are insightful and will be valuable to the Agency as it works to improve its ability to assess and manage risk from environmental exposure to asbestos.

The objective of the proposed approach was to investigate the influence of asbestos mineral types and fiber dimensions on estimates of cancer potency derived from epidemiological data. The Committee agreed that these are important determinants of asbestos toxicity and that this objective was worth pursuing. However, the Committee found that the quality of the available exposure data was generally insufficient to support the effort EPA proposed. In light of the Committee's concerns about the proposed approach, the EPA Office of Solid Waste and Emergency Response has decided not to pursue the effort at this time.

Many of the committee members expressed a desire for EPA to conduct a broader review; one that would address other critical determinants of asbestos toxicity including fiber biopersistence, mode of action, smoking, and sensitive populations. The Committee members also encouraged EPA to explore alternatives to the cumulative exposure model that it currently uses. The proposed approach was a focused evaluation to support the development of a product that could be used in the near-term for assessing risk at Superfund sites. The Agency will continue its investigations of the amphibole asbestos found in Libby, Montana, and other efforts to improve its ability to assess and manage asbestos risks. We will consider the SAB Asbestos Committee's comments as we move forward with these important activities.

Again, my thanks to you and the members of the SAB Asbestos Committee.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "S. L. Johnson".

Stephen L. Johnson