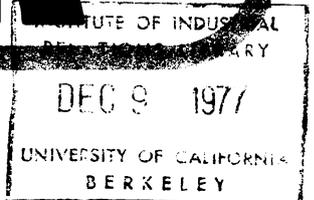


MONITOR

VOL. 4 NO. 7 • OCTOBER 1977



PESTICIDE DBCP BANNED AS CANCER, STERILITY HAZARD

On August 12, the California Department of Industrial Relations ordered a ban on the manufacture, formulation, sale, or use of the pesticide 1, 2-dibromo-3-chloropropane (DBCP). In a simultaneous announcement with the State Department of Food and Agriculture, DIR, the agency responsible for Cal/OSHA, termed medical evidence "irrefutable" that the chemical is "hazardous to workers and has been demonstrated to cause sterility in human males."

DBCP, a pesticide widely used in agriculture since 1955 to kill nematodes, worms which destroy roots, is sold by a large number of suppliers. It is marketed under 56 different trade names, including *Fumazone*, *Nemafume*, *Nemagon*, *Nema-Kill*, *Nemaset*, *BBC12*, and *DS 1879*. It is a trace component of numerous other chemical products, including the flame retardant *Tris* (used on clothing), which has been found to cause cancer in laboratory animals. About 800,000 pounds of DBCP are used on California crops yearly.

The quick State action followed revelations in July that a number of workers exposed to DBCP at Occidental Chemical Company in Lathrop, California are now infertile (that is, they have zero or very low sperm counts). The Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers International Union (OCAW) Local 1-5, which represents Occidental production workers, asked LOHP Medical Director Dr. Donald Whorton to investigate the problem.

Whorton's investigation found that 14 of 27 men handling the substance at Occidental Chemical were infertile. Subsequently, the U.S. Dept. of Labor reported that five of nine Occidental salesmen who demonstrated DBCP for potential customers had "abnormal" sperm counts. Later, on August 11, Dow Chemical announced that 62 of 86 workers exposed to DBCP at its Magnolia, Arkansas facility were infertile. Shell Chemical Company then found that 14 workers at its Denver, Colorado DBCP facility had below-normal sperm production.

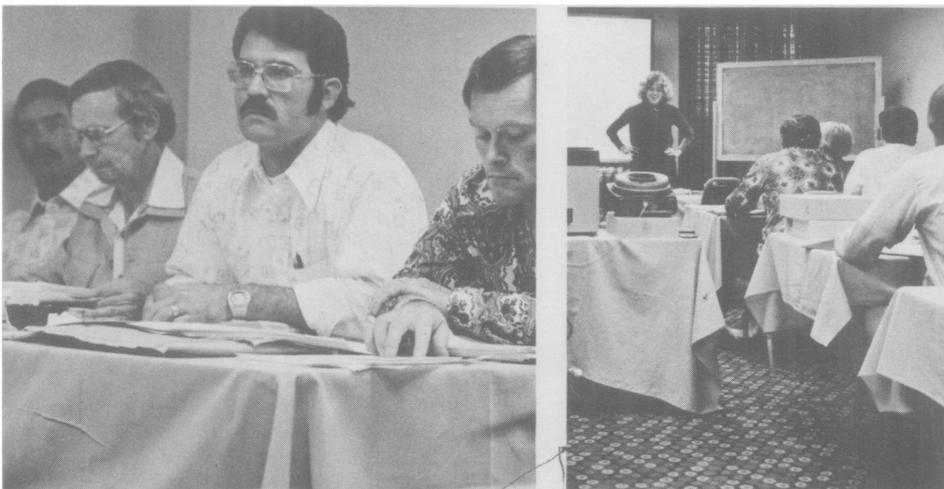
Strong evidence has also been uncovered that DBCP may be a carcinogen (cause cancer). The suggestion is based on laboratory tests done for the National Cancer Institute which show that DBCP caused stomach cancer among both sexes of mice and rats, and caused mammary tumors in rats.

FEDERAL ACTION

Immediately after the California ban, the federal government moved against DBCP. At a joint news conference in Washington, D.C. on September 8, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) announced emergency temporary standards to limit worker exposure to the chemical nationwide. Effective Sept. 9, the agency said, employee exposure to DBCP must be limited to 10 parts per billion

continued on p. 4

BUILDING TRADES APPRENTICE INSTRUCTORS ATTEND WORKSHOPS

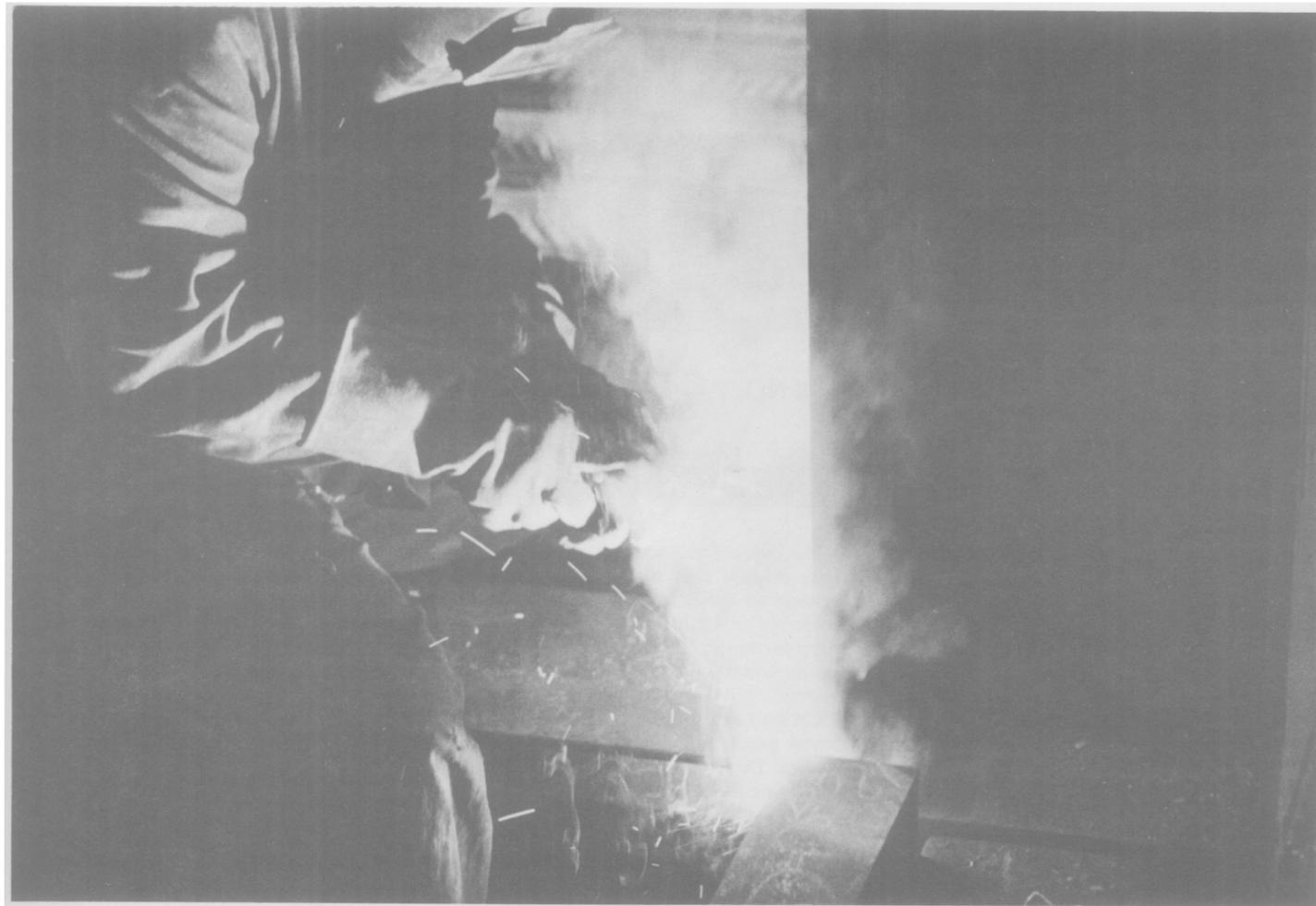


Building Trades Apprenticeship instructors pay close attention to LOHP's proposed new health and safety curriculum materials at session in Berkeley's Claremont Hotel (left.) At right, in a lighter moment, Janet Bertinusoh of LOHP shows slides on construction hazards. (Photos: Ken Light.)

During the month of September, LOHP sponsored two workshops for instructors and coordinators in Building Trades Apprenticeship Programs. Many of the participants were from joint labor-management apprenticeship programs affiliated with the California Apprenticeship Council.

Health and safety materials have begun to be incorporated into apprentices' courses of study in recent years. LOHP has a contract with the U.S. Department of Labor, Occupational Safety and Health Administration, to develop training materials for apprentices. The September workshops, conducted under the OSHA contract, were designed to introduce these materials to the program instructors and to present instructors with information on hazards (particularly health hazards) with which they might

continued on p. 4



Building Trades Blues

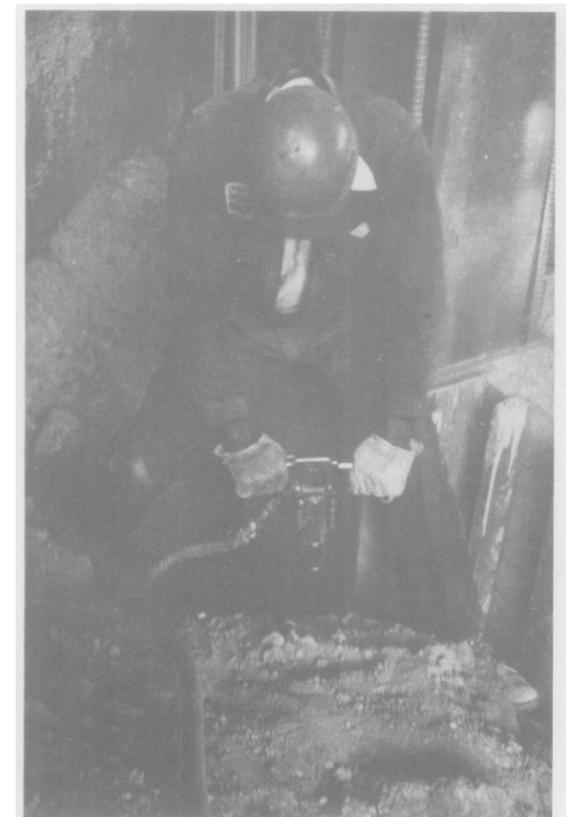
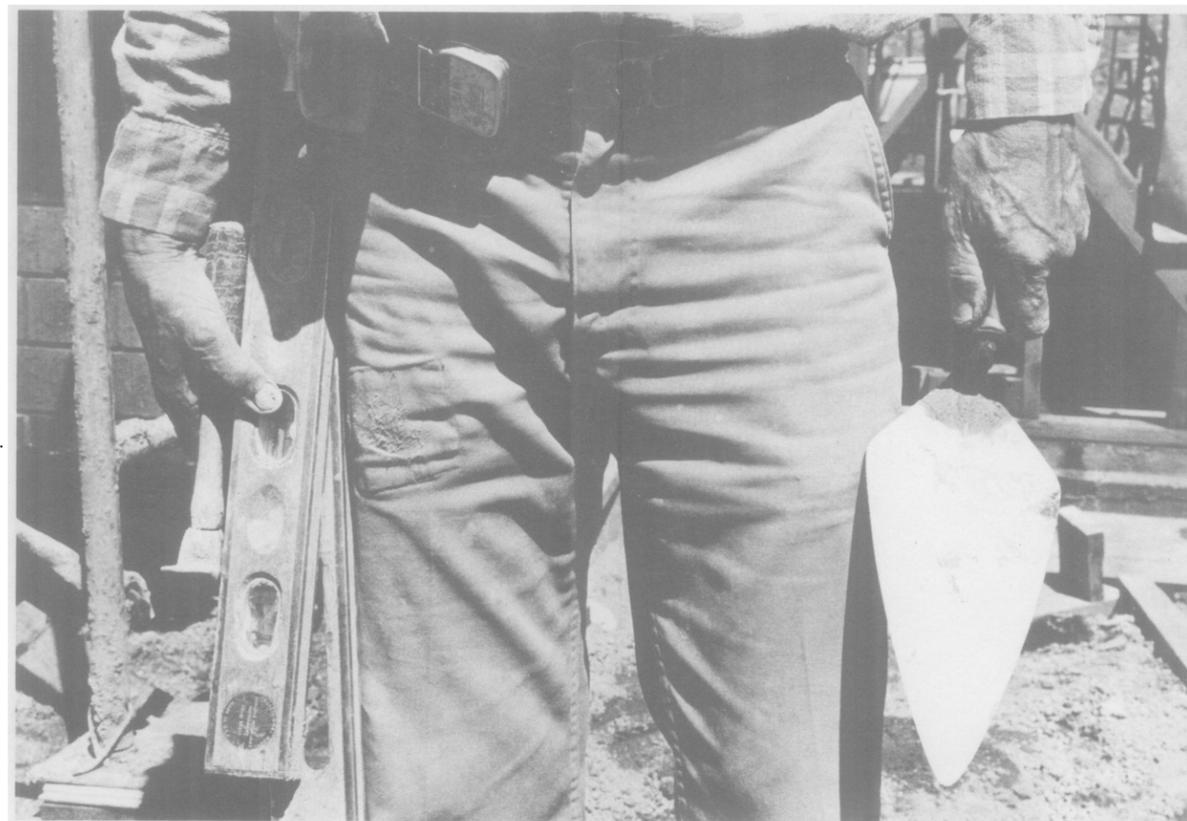
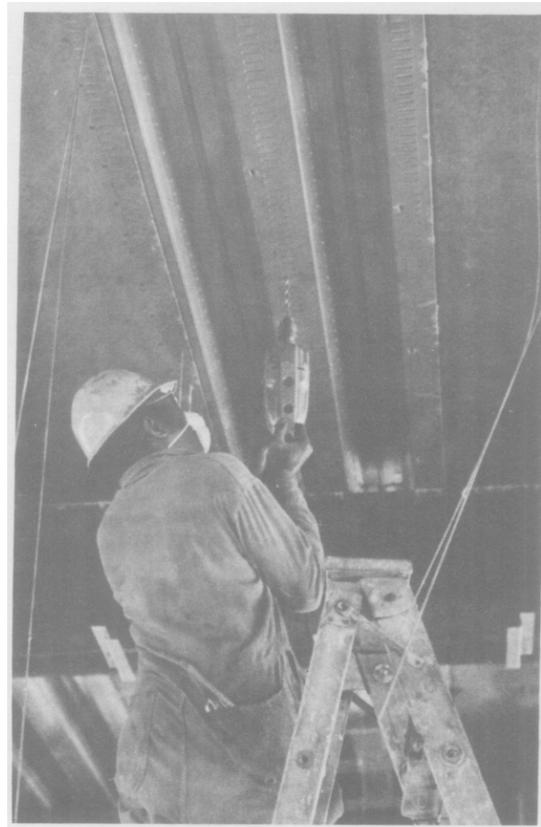
HAZARDS IN CONSTRUCTION

(Photos: Ken Light.)

Although more concern is usually focused on hazards in fixed industrial workplaces, building trades workers in construction are also exposed to many safety and health hazards. Some are similar to the dangers faced by production workers, but many are unique to construction work. Construction sites are temporary, many trades share the same work space, and work is often rushed. As a result, injuries are common. Moreover, the hazards created by one craft may affect other workers, and traditional methods to control hazards (for example, ventilation systems) may not be practical.

Health and safety problems facing building trades workers range from those that are easily recognized, such as improperly shored trenches or unguarded floor coverings, to hidden hazards from chemicals used or produced on the job site.

As shown, counterclockwise, from top left: Welding fumes (1) and metal dust from drilling or sawing (2) may affect the lungs, nervous system, or other body systems. Wet cement and concrete often cause "bricklayers' hands" because they remove moisture from the skin (3). And the use of pneumatic drills not only creates dust which may cause breathing problems, but also produces very high noise levels (4). Safety hazards such as working at great heights or around sharp objects are also common to construction work (5).



DBCP

continued from p. 1

during any 15 minute period. Eye and skin contact are prohibited.

On September 29, the Cal/OSHA Standards Board officially adopted the federal temporary emergency standards.

In October, federal OSHA proposed a permanent DBCP exposure standard even more stringent: one part per billion over an eight-hour day, and ten parts per billion in a 15-minute period. The OSHA proposal is pending.

At the September 8 press conference, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) also announced its intention to order that: use of the chemical on certain crops be suspended; its use on other crops be restricted to application by trained employees wearing protective clothing and respirators; and its non-agricultural uses be reviewed in a hearing by January. On October 27 EPA issued the order, strengthening it by announcing an intention to suspend all uses. The actual suspension, however, could come only after lengthy appeals.

—MORE NEXT MONTH

Published monthly by the Labor Occupational Health Program, Institute of Industrial Relations, University of California, 2521 Channing Way, Berkeley, California 94720, (415) 642-5507.

STAFF

Janet Bertinuson	Paul Chown
Morris Davis	Andrea Hricko
Ken Light	Jeannie Lum
Ken McGrew	Kate Pernish
Sidney Weinstein	Donald Whorton
Gene Darling, Editorial Assistant	

Annual subscription rates: Organizations and Institutions—\$10.00, Individuals—\$5.00. Quantity shipments are also available to union locals or other groups at a cost of \$1.00 per year for each extra copy, with an annual subscription.

The opinions expressed in the MONITOR represent the views of the authors, and not necessarily those of the Institute of Industrial Relations.

All material may be reprinted without permission. Please credit LOHP Monitor.

Growers Point Out Positive Effects of Sterility

As the discovery that the pesticide DBCP causes sterility was breaking this summer, prodding both State and Federal governments to take unprecedented action, a nationwide growers' organization came up with a novel approach to the problem: using pesticides as a means of birth control.

An officer of the National Peach Council, which represents 6300 growers in 35 states, wrote to Dr. Eula Bingham, head of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, that:

"While involuntary sterility caused by a manufactured chemical may be bad, it is not necessarily so. After all, there are many people now paying to have themselves sterilized to assure that they will no longer become parents."

Robert K. Phillips, Executive Secretary of the Peach Council, went on to propose (quite seriously) that workers might volunteer for positions where they would be exposed to DBCP "as an alternative to planned surgery for a vasectomy or tubal ligation."

"We do believe in safety in the workplace, but there can be good as well as bad sides to a situation," Phillips said.

—California AFL/CIO News

BUILDING TRADES

continued from p. 1

not be familiar. LOHP wanted to insure that the materials are useful and that they can be incorporated into existing apprentice programs.

Instructors trained at the workshops, held in Berkeley and Hollywood, both teach and are themselves members of diverse trades including carpenters, drywall installers, electricians, floor coverers, operating engineers, pipe trades, plumbers, and welders. Participants viewed slide-tape presentations developed by LOHP such as: An Introduction to Hazards in Construction; Health Hazards for Building Trades Workers; Walking Working Surfaces; and Noise. To supplement these shows, instructors were given a manual covering related topics.

Most instructors and coordinators participating in the workshops felt that the materials could be adapted and included in their programs, and that the manual with instructor notes and lesson plans would be easy to use. Many instructors indicated that the information on health hazards was most interesting because hidden health hazards often go unrecognized, and consequently uncorrected, while safety hazards are more familiar.

The instructors felt that material on prevention and control measures was also very important. LOHP will incorporate more such information into final versions of both the manual and slide shows.

Please enter a subscription to the Labor Occupational Health Program **MONITOR**.

Check one: Organization (\$10.00) Individual (\$5.00)

Quantity shipment of _____ extra copies per issue

Name _____ Organization (if any) _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Please prepay. Make checks payable to/Regents of U.C.

Institute of Industrial Relations,
University of California
Center for Labor Research and Education

2521 Channing Way
Berkeley, CA 94720

Address Correction Requested

Nonprofit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Berkeley, Calif.
Permit No. 1