

## **IMPORTANT WORKER HEALTH NOTICE** **for the GML Popcorn Plant in Jasper, Missouri** **July 2003**

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Since the Missouri Department of Health informed NIOSH about severe lung disease (bronchiolitis obliterans) in former microwave popcorn plant workers, we have made seven surveys of the plant. Here is a short summary of our findings from these visits to the plant.

### **What did we learn during the first six visits?**

- Chemical exposure levels were high (see the graph).
- Workers with high exposures were more likely to have abnormal breathing tests.
- One in every four workers at this plant had abnormal breathing test results in November 2000 (about 3 times as many as expected).
- A few workers who originally had normal breathing tests have become abnormal.
- About one in every four workers with at least two NIOSH breathing tests has had rapid falls in lung function.

### **What did we learn from the January 2003 visit about flavoring exposures?**

- Flavoring exposures in packaging were lower than ever before.
- Powdered flavorings and the new mixing room lowered exposure for mixers.
- Quality control room exposures increased nearly 10 times from August 2002, but were similar to levels measured during the winter months.

### **What did we learn in February 2003 about worker health?**

- A worker in a high-risk area (mixing room, mezzanine, or quality control) had developed an abnormal breathing test.
- Some workers with abnormal tests improved.

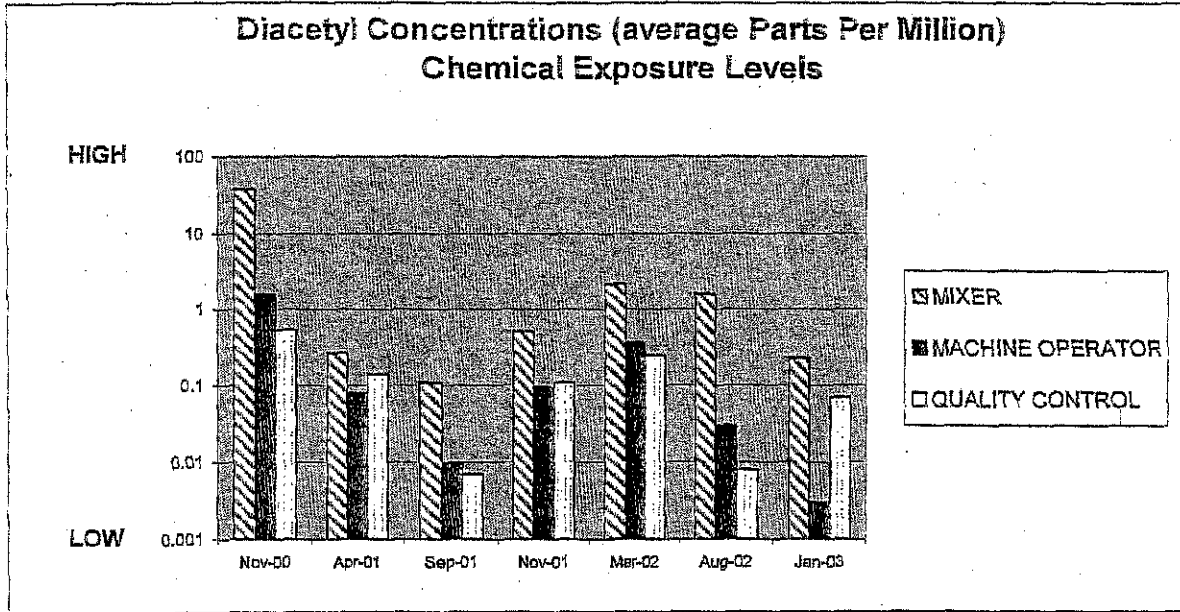
### **Is the plant safe?**

- The company has made a lot of improvements during the last 2 ½ years.
- Since our last visit, the company has enclosed the holding tanks on the mezzanine and the packaging area is probably safe now.
- Workers in the mixing room, mezzanine, and quality control may still have dangerous exposures.



### What can you do to protect your lungs?

- Do not enter the mixing room, mezzanine area, or QC room without a respirator.
- Take a breathing test whenever it is offered.
- If your breathing tests show a rapid fall or are abnormal, ask to see the company's doctors in Springfield.



NIOSH is giving free breathing tests for current workers at the plant on August 11-15, 2003. If you prefer to be tested away from the plant, please call 1-800-232-2114 to schedule an appointment to be tested along with former workers at the Carthage Health Department on August 8-9, 2003.

This is likely to be the last medical testing visit of NIOSH; we have advised Gilster Mary Lee to continue testing high risk workers three times per year. In the event of future concerns, any three workers can confidentially request a NIOSH health hazard evaluation. Request forms are available at [www.cdc.gov/niosh](http://www.cdc.gov/niosh) or call 1-800-232-2114.

**WORKERS AGREEING TO PARTICIPATE IN ALL MEDICAL TESTS WILL BE COMPENSATED FOR THEIR INCONVENIENCE WITH A \$15.00 WALMART GIFT CARD.**

