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February 16, 2006

Utility Workers Union of America, AFL-CIO
7200 Greenleaf Avenue, Suite #380
Whittier, California 90601

Attention: Ms. Marti Harris
Chair, Joint Steering Committee

Dear Ms. Harris,

At the last Joint Steering Committee Meeting on Feb 9, 2006, there was discussion on the Respiratory Medical Program. Some questions and concerns were raised regarding the program and the following is information we gathered from safety staff. We have also included copies of the items you requested to assist in addressing your concerns.

CONCERN – Who is Industrial Hearing and Pulmonary Management (IHPM)?

RESPONSE – We have attached an informational brochure from Industrial Hearing and Pulmonary Management (IHPM). IHPM has been in the business of providing Respiratory Medical Program Management for 10 years, and has over 250 clients in California and Arizona.

CONCERN – A request was made to provide copies of certifications received by employees of IHPM in performing pulmonary tests.

RESPONSE – We have attached copies of the certifications regarding the employees of IHPM.

CONCERN – A request was made to provide information about the National Institute for Occupational Safety (NIOSH).

RESPONSE – The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) is the federal agency responsible for conducting research and making recommendations for the prevention of work-related injury and illness. NIOSH is part of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in the Department of Health and Human Services. The Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970 created both NIOSH and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). OSHA is in the U.S. Department of Labor and is responsible for developing and enforcing workplace safety and health regulations. NIOSH is in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and is an agency established to help assure safe and healthful working conditions for working men and women by providing research, information, education, and training in the field of occupational safety and health. NIOSH provides national and world leadership to prevent work-related illness, injury, disability, and death by gathering information, conducting scientific research, and translating the knowledge gained into products and services.

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IHPM technicians, properly trained per NIOSH in an approved course, perform Spirometry tests to be used by the Physician or Licensed Health Care Practitioner (PLHCP) in determining an employee's ability to wear a respirator.

CONCERN – A concern was raised regarding the safety of spirometry testing. For example, could the testing cause a collapsed lung? Another concern was raised regarding whether the test should only be done at a clinic where proper emergency first aid could be rendered.

RESPONSE - This testing is being done by Industrial Hearing and Pulmonary Management (IHPM) in a mobile testing unit, as part of the Respirator Medical Program. NIOSH indicates on their website that spirometry is a safe test. Pulmonary Function tests are a broad range of tests that are usually done in a health care provider's office or a specialized facility or location, such as the mobile testing units from IHPM. They measure how well the lungs take in and exhale air and how efficiently they transfer oxygen into the blood. Spirometry measures how well the lungs exhale. The information gathered during this test is useful in diagnosing certain types of lung disorders and also workplace medical surveillance programs. Lung function tests present little or no risk to a healthy person. The medical questionnaire that is completed prior to the exam and evaluated by the clinician would disclose what types of conditions are contraindicated to use spirometry; i.e. pneumothorax, recent abdominal or thoracic surgery, recent eye surgery, recent myocardial infarction or unstable angina, thoracic aneurysms, etc. If any of these conditions were present then the employee would not be screened. A large majority of workplace pulmonary function testing is done onsite, at company locations, and in their occupational clinics, not in physician offices. The occupational health nurse or technician, who is certified to perform spirometry, is usually the one who performs the test without the assistance of a physician. The most common side effect is lightheadedness, which usually goes away very quickly after having the patient sit and rest for a few minutes.

CONCERN – A concern was raised regarding the handling of confidential respirator medical questionnaires during review by the IHPM technician.

RESPONSE – IHPM prefers to receive the questionnaires, packaged together by location with individual sealed envelopes inside, in the mail when time allows. When IHPM technicians must receive the questionnaires directly from the employees, the following procedure will be followed: Employees should hand the IHPM technician their questionnaire in a sealed envelope. The IHPM technician will scan the questionnaire for information that would trigger a pulmonary function test (PFT). The questionnaire will then be placed in a zipper pouch, which will be in the possession of the IHPM technician. The questionnaires will be delivered to the IHPM physician for complete evaluation and determination of employee ability to wear a respirator.

CONCERN – A concern was raised about when an employee would be able to speak to the IHPM physician, if an employee requested to do so by checking "Yes" to the medical questionnaire #10. Would you like to talk to the health care professional who will review this questionnaire about your answers to this questionnaire?

RESPONSE – The IHPM physician will contact an employee, at the time and phone number given by the employee on the questionnaire, after receipt and review of the questionnaire and any PFT results. Employees must provide phone numbers for phones which are operational, and preferably can accept the physician's message if the employee does not answer. The opportunity to discuss the questionnaire and examination results with the physician is in accordance with the requirements of the California Occupational Safety and Health Administration (Cal/OSHA).

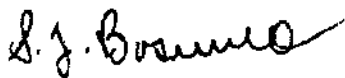
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CONCERN – A concern was raised about the job codes included in the respirator program, and how they were selected.

RESPONSE – Job profiles for all positions were reviewed for potential exposure to hazardous materials/conditions above limits established by Cal/OSHA, in a routine or foreseeable emergency situation. Employees of staff and operation departments were also consulted to determine which hazardous materials/conditions each job code may be exposed. All employees in those job codes where potential exposure could occur were included in the respirator program as mandatory users. Voluntary users are employees in job codes where some use of hazardous materials could occur, below any Cal/OSHA limits, and an employee may choose to wear a respirator. Potential exposures are listed in the Gas Standard in Appendix A.

In closing, we appreciate the Union's concern regarding our employee's safety and look forward to working together with you to address any concerns.

Sincerely,



S. J. Bosworth
Manager, Labor Relations

Attachments:

1. Gas Standard 104.06
2. Letter of Agreement – Company/Union OSHA Respirator Medical Evaluation Questionnaire
3. Informational Brochure from Industrial Hearing and Pulmonary Management
4. Copies of certifications on employees from Industrial Hearing and Pulmonary Management
5. Service Agreement between SoCalGas and Industrial Hearing and Pulmonary Management

cc: JSC members
LRAs
Bonnie Feemster
Sara Franke
James Noon