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Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM

2157 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6143

MAJORITY (202) 225-5074
MINORITY (202) 225-5051
TTY (202) 225-6852

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SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL SECURITY, VETERANS AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Christopher Shays, Connecticut
Chairman

Room B-372 Rayburn Building

Washington, D.C. 20515

Tel: 202 225-2548

Fax: 202 225-2382

June 30, 1999

The Honorable William S. Cohen
Secretary
U.S. Department of Defense
The Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301-1155

Dear Secretary Cohen:

The Subcommittee on National Security, Veterans Affairs, and International Relations has jurisdiction over matters affecting the "overall economy, efficiency and management of government operations and activities..." (Rule X, clause 1(h)(6), Rules of the House of Representatives). Pursuant to that oversight jurisdiction, the Subcommittee is reviewing the federal government's use of beryllium in weapons and munitions, the known health hazards associated with the use of this product and government efforts to inform and protect beryllium workers. Please respond to the following questions:

1) According to DOD, what are the known hazards of working with beryllium and ingesting beryllium dust?

A) As a primary end user of beryllium, please discuss whether DOD has conducted or supported any scientific research regarding possible health hazards associated with beryllium exposure.

2) Please identify and discuss any efforts taken by DOD, in coordination with the former Atomic Energy Commission (AEC), the Department of Energy (DOE) or the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) to ensure beryllium workers were appropriately warned and

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protected from known health hazards associated with exposure to beryllium dust.

A) Please provide copies of any reports, studies and correspondence between DOD, AEC, DOE, OSHA and relevant defense-related manufacturers regarding known beryllium health risks, government efforts and warnings to reduce those risks to beryllium workers.

B) Please identify and provide any documentation detailing DOD's coordination with the former Atomic Energy Commission and OSHA in supporting their efforts to implement appropriate safety standards over the years to reduce harmful exposure levels of beryllium dust and minimize worker risk.

3) Prior to the creation of OSHA in 1970, did DOD have any policies in place requiring systematic inspections of beryllium weapons production plants (by DOD or the manufacturer) to measure the level of beryllium dust exposure to workers? If so, what were the frequency and results of such inspections?

4) In the manufacture of these weapons, weapon systems and munitions, what efforts have been made and are being made by DOD to ensure workers involved in the manufacturing process are informed about the health risks associated with beryllium?

A) Please provide copies of any communications including safety protocols, warning labels or manufacturing guidelines developed for the purpose of warning beryllium manufacturers/workers of health risks.

5) Identify the types of weapons, weapon systems and munition products in which beryllium has been used since it was first introduced into the United States in the 1940s.

Your response is requested by close of business July 30, 1999. Similar inquiries are being sent to the Department of Energy and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration. If you have any questions regarding this request, please contact Marcia Sayer of the Subcommittee staff at 202-225-2548.

Thank you for your assistance in this matter.

Sincerely,



Christopher Shays
Chairman

cc: The Honorable Rod R. Blagojevich
The Honorable Mark E. Souder
The Honorable Dan Burton
The Honorable Henry A. Waxman