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NASSCO's Position on Styrene and the Report on Carcinogens (RoC)

(Owings Mills, Maryland – June 10, 2011) – Much speculation is circulating regarding the 12th Report on Carcinogens (RoC) that is pending signature by the Honorable Kathleen Sebelius, Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services. If signed, the Report will list styrene as “reasonably anticipated to be a human carcinogen”.

NASSCO, the National Association of Sewer Service Companies, takes the position on this pending classification that, without solid evidence of a link between styrene and cancer in humans, we should avoid unfounded concern that would adversely affect a number of businesses, including those within the sewer industry.

Styrene is a major ingredient in cured-in-place pipe (CIPP), a method by which existing underground sewer pipes are first cleaned and then rehabilitated with a composite material, typically using a styrene-based resin liner which molds itself to the interior of the existing sewer pipe wall. This method provides a low cost solution for system owners by rehabilitating and repairing pipes without disturbing the ecological footprint by avoiding excavation and the resulting damage to roads, sidewalks and above-ground structures. It further reduces air pollution from traffic detours, eliminates the need to move dirt and debris to landfills, and minimizes disturbance to residents and businesses.

This rapidly growing technology, proven in the United States for more than thirty years, provides jobs for many people within the trenchless industry. The classification of styrene as “reasonably anticipated to be a human carcinogen” would have a major impact not only on the individuals employed, but the communities served. Pipeline rehabilitation costs could increase significantly and repair methods could revert back to less efficient technologies, including digging up and replacing entire pipelines.

According to the American Composites Manufacturer's Association (ACMA):

- More than 750,000 Americans are employed in jobs that depend on styrene.
- Historically, in the United States and Europe, people have worked with styrene safely for 50 years.

- Several long-term studies examined 60,000 health records of workers exposed to styrene. These findings showed no link between styrene exposure and the development of cancer in humans.
- Federal agencies, including OSHA and EPA, are aware of scientific data and have not concluded that there is sufficient risk to require additional protections.

Currently, officials from President Obama's administration are discussing whether they should review the data being used to support a forthcoming Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) assessment. Questions are also being raised regarding the inclusion of styrene as "reasonably anticipated to be a human carcinogen".

At a June 3, 2011 hearing of the House Energy and Commerce Committee's oversight panel, Rep. Morgan Griffith (R-VA) asked the administration's Regulatory Review Chief Cass Sunstein to review the matter, citing concerns that a carcinogen label could have a negative impact on jobs. Sunstein agreed to raise this issue with his colleague John Holdren, the director of the White House office of Science and Technology Policy and a special assistant to the President on science.

Later in the June 3rd hearing, Griffith also raised questions about the National Toxicology Program profile of styrene, which, if branded carcinogenic, could lead to a loss of jobs in his district. "We have all these jobs that would be impacted and the science doesn't seem to back that up," Griffith concluded.

We agree.

To support NASSCO's position for further study of the effects of styrene before designating it "reasonably anticipated to be a human carcinogen", we encourage the underground industry to join ACMA, to write their elected officials, and support ACMA's efforts toward re-evaluation of this classification at the Federal level.

For more information visit www.nassco.org or www.acmanet.org

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