

This paper is directed toward students of the Community who wish to continue a study of occupational health and safety in Rhode Island or who simply want to understand the situation and problems as they exist at this time.

The occupational health and safety hazards in Rhode Island are very real problems that are endangering the health of the State's workers. Occupational health hazards are far more insidious than those of safety and are much more difficult to detect and deal with properly. It now appears that some substances used in industry may cause cancer fifteen years or more after a single exposure. There are thousands of workers in the State of Rhode Island. Many are exposed to known hazards, others are working in situations and with substances that have never been investigated for their health effects. There are documented cases of the harmful affects to a worker's health - some lethal - directly related to Rhode Island industry.

The responsibility for enforcement of the occupational safety and health standards in Rhode Island currently lies with the federal government. This enforcement is carried out through the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). OSHA is seriously understaffed and underfunded so that it is impossible to meet the health and safety inspection needs of Rhode Island's 5,000 industries. OSHA's health inspections over the past year have only occurred as a response to a complaint. With such serious inadequacies, the OSHA health enforcement

program is crisis - oriented rather than preventative.

In the Spring of 1973, Rhode Island submitted a state plan for occupational safety and health in accordance with the provisions of section 18(b) of the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970. This plan has not received approval from the federal government for various reasons. On May 15, 1974, the agreement under section 7(c)(1) of the Occupational Safety and Health Act, where the state enters a trial period with the federal government, was formally cancelled. Since this date, there has been no real effort to correct the basic problems which prevented acceptance of the plan. At this time, the major impetus to reopen the issue of occupational health and safety legislation must come from Governor J. Joseph Garrahy.

The methodology I used to shape the course of my investigation of Rhode Island's occupational safety and health is included in this paper. It is followed by recommendations to future students of this field of study. The purpose of this report is to provide a basis or point of departure for the work of others interested in Rhode Island's occupational health and safety.