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(Original text in Japanese)

To the Press,

Report of the “Expert Panel on Biliary Tract Cancer at printing plants” and actions to be taken by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare

The Ministry confirms a causal relationship between occupational exposure and the development of biliary tract cancer, and will officially recognize the biliary tract cancer cases as work-related diseases and enforce regulatory control of the chemical substances concerned.

1 The Expert Panel's report

After workers at a printing plant in Osaka prefecture filed claims for biliary tract cancer, the Ministry organized an expert panel to look into a causal relationship between occupational exposure and the development of biliary tract cancer in September 2012. The expert panel's report has been finalized today, concluding the current medical findings on the possible cause of the biliary tract cancer cases.

The report concludes the following:

- It can be medically assumed that biliary tract cancer can be developed after long-term exposure of dichloromethane and/or 1,2-dichloropropane at high concentration; and
- It is highly probable that the biliary tract cancer cases at that printing plant were developed after long-term exposure of 1,2-dichloropropane in high concentration.

2 Actions to be taken by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare

In response to the conclusion of the report, the Ministry will take the following actions:

1) Recognition of the biliary tract cancer cases as work-related diseases

Local Inspectors Office in Osaka is to inform the 16 claimants of the official recognition as occupational biliary tract cancer by the end of March 2013. The 17th claim case at the same plant filed in February 2013 will be reviewed shortly after an investigation is completed.

Claim cases on biliary tract cancer at other plants will also be reviewed in due course. Prescription does not commence to run until 14 March 2013 regarding the claims on occupational biliary tract cancer caused by 1,2-dichloromethane and/or dichloromethane.

2) Preventive actions for chemical hazards control

In addition to inspections and correspondence surveys conducted on printing plants throughout Japan, the Ministry will take the following actions:

- To amend the Ordinance on the Prevention of Hazards due to Chemical Substances and others accordingly to cover engineering control measures against workers' exposure to 1,2-dichloropropane,;
- Formulated guidelines for employers not to use 1,2-dichloropropane until the above regulatory amendments come into effect, and to prevent workers' exposure when using organic solvents for cleaning printing machines or degreasing metal parts; and
- to fully enforce measures against exposure to dichloromethane based on the Ordinance on the Prevention of Organic Solvent Poisoning.

Attachement 1: Occupational biliary tract cancer cases in Japan

Attachement 2: The number of claims filed on biliary tract cancer cases at printing plants /February 2013