Book reviews

Recommendations for Handling Asbestos. Engineering Equipment Users Association Handbook. No. 33. 1969. (Pp. 24; 12s. to members, 30s to non-members.) Engineering Equipment Users Association, 20 Grosvenor Place, London, S.W.1.

This excellent little handbook contains the new "Asbestos Regulations" which came into force on 1 May 1970 in England, Wales, and Scotland. It also contains notes from the Factory Inspectorate on the current interpretation of the Regulations and lists of alternative materials which can be used by those who are unwilling to go to the trouble and expense involved in using asbestos in an acceptable manner.

The main part of the handbook consists of four sections which explain in simple terms the reason for and meaning of the new Regulations under the headings (1) The Nature of the Problem, (2) Legal Requirements, (3) Measurement of Concentration of Airborne Dust, and (4) Precautions to be taken. The advice given is excellent and fills in several of the gaps left by the official regulations. The advice to recruit men of over 40 years when some degree of hazard exists is excellent. On the whole, I would favour rather than exclude men already suffering from symptoms of chronic respiratory disease provided they could tolerate the environment. I agree with the advice to exclude people with rheumatoid arthritis but am not clear what relevance hypertension has to the problem.

There is one work situation which is not mentioned specifically among those where the risk of inhaling dust is high. This is when painters are preparing insulated surfaces for painting, a process which appears to carry an appreciable risk of subsequent malignant disease.

P. C. ELMES

Ergebnisse von Untersuchungen auf dem Gebiet der Staub- und Silikosebekämpfung in Steinkohlenbergbau. 1969. By the Minister für Wirtschaft, Mittelstand und Verkehr des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen, Band 7. (Pp. 226; DM 54,70.) Buchdruckerei und Verlag Hermann Bosmann GMBH Detmold.

This is the 7th volume of collected papers from Nordrhein-Westfalen and is concerned with dust, silica, and coal-miners. It contains 41 papers on a variety of subjects from dust sampling methods to the effect of PVNO on the phagocytosis of quartz dust in the peritoneum. The

papers are for the most part concise, well written, and beautifully illustrated. They represent a large volume of painstaking detailed work done by the relevant departments in Western Germany which has presumably been published elsewhere as well. Collected in this form this is an excellent reference source for research workers. The work is too detailed to be of much value to others although it may be of interest for them to know that NA 274 Bisolvon - Bromhexine increases the rate at which silica dust is retained (in rats) whereas cigarette smoke does not.

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British Medical Bulletin, Vol. 25, No. 3, September 1969, 'Mechanisms of Toxicity'. (Pp. 219 to 312; 40s.) Published by the Medical Department, The British Council, 97 and 99 Park Street, London, WIY 4HQ.

Conferences and discussions on the mechanisms of the toxic action of chemicals and drugs are rather frequent. But publications are few, and this bulletin, the first review of the toxicity of selected industrial chemicals by British experimenters, in tribute to Sir Rudolph Peters, is of great interest and practical value for the personal libraries of industrial toxicologists, experimental toxicologists, and biochemists. It is an excellent summary of the knowledge of the subject up to the beginning of 1969, contributed by experts in their own fields. The format of the Bulletin is, as in previous ones, published by the Medical Department of the British Council.

For the medical officer in industrial medical practice, the most helpful sections are those concerned with toxic neuropathies, the fibrogenic action of silica, the metabolism of absorbed chemicals, and the toxicology of bipyridyl compounds. The neuropathies associated with the entry of organophosphorus and organomercurial compounds into the animal body are well discussed, and the possible association of neuropathies of hitherto unknown aetiology with chemical activity and binding to certain esterases in the neurone is an exciting prospect. The pathogenesis of human silicosis remains an absorbing medical study, despite a falling incidence and positive linkage with the inhalation of cigarette smoke, and in discussing the fibrogenic action of silica the reviewer presents a broad hypothesis in which the surface activities of siliceous particles on cell membranes is invoked. Confronted with the assessment of exposures to industrial chemicals, the medical officer uses the products of meta-