

October 18, 1935

Dr. R. R. Sayers  
Office of Industrial Hygiene  
and Sanitation  
U. S. Public Health Service  
Washington, D. C.

Re: [REDACTED] - Repairman  
Pure Oil Company  
Athens, Ohio

Dear Dr. Sayers:

In accordance with our conversation of a few days ago, I am reporting to you herewith a case of lead poisoning in a pump repairman at Athens, Ohio. The man, [REDACTED], was engaged in overhauling pumps which were in such bad condition that they could not be repaired at the filling station. Such pumps had accumulated over some period and were thoroughly dry. On dis-assembling them and cleaning the parts for re-assembly, this man was engaged for a number of hours continuously in brushing out the litharge and glycerine paste used at the points and the small amounts of triethyl lead compounds which had been deposited on the exposed surfaces. In doing this with a wire brush without any mask, he was exposed to such an amount of dust that he noticed a considerable irritation of the eyes and nose. The night following the exposure he was troubled with insomnia and for several days afterward was quite ill with loss of appetite, continuing insomnia, muscle cramps in various parts of his body, and a nervous system irritation which was expressed in a generally increased muscle tone. He was seen by two or three physicians whose diagnoses were not in complete agreement, but his family physician attributed his condition to his occupation and diagnosed it as lead poisoning. The blood findings and the other clinical observations are not too exact and are not entirely trustworthy. However, it is apparent that the clinical course was fairly characteristic of a mild intoxication from organic lead compounds. His illness was brief and resulted in complete recovery with no evidence of residual symptoms. A report of this case was sent to the Ohio Department of Health and it was brought to my attention through correspondence with Dr. Hayhurst of that Department. The man applied for and received compensation, and from that point of view the case may be regarded as closed.

In view of the fact that this was the first case that had come to our attention, I immediately put into effect a general inquiry as to the conditions under which this type of work is done in various parts of the country.

R. Sayers

I am assembling the information and expect to have a number of selected men examined carefully and checked as to their lead excretion. When we have received a proper basis for action, I shall certainly make recommendations which should result in the elimination of any danger which may exist elsewhere in this work. Danger can be easily and completely eliminated by cleaning the parts in a wet state.

As to pump repairs in general, I have found out that an overwhelming proportion is done at filling stations as required. Here working on the outside and with equipment which has recently been wet, there is no reason to believe that any significant dangers exist. Nevertheless we shall study the entire matter and will make it a basis for a further detailed report to you.

With kindest personal regards,

Very truly yours,

RAK:is

Robert A. Kehoe, M.D.