

January 10, 1928

Mr. E. W. Webb,
Ethyl Gasoline Corp.,
25 Broadway,
New York City.

My dear Mr. Webb:

A reply to the letter from Dr. Redden of the Red Cross is a little difficult to make, not because of any facts which would indicate that the use of Ethyl gasoline in the way mentioned is in any way dangerous, but because to suggest the use of Ethyl gasoline in the washing and treating of open wounds definitely interferes with our purpose of educating gasoline handlers against unnecessary skin contact with gasolines in general, and specifically with Ethyl gasoline.

I do not believe it would be advisable for the Ethyl Gasoline Corporation to advise this procedure, not only because of this fact but also because there has been a very definite tendency (especially pronounced in recent months) to attribute certain types of dermatitis to the results of skin contact with Ethyl gasoline. I do not believe that there is a single fact to support this conclusion; nevertheless, it has been done and probably will be done in the future. Furthermore, in spite of the fact that gasoline is capable of cleansing greasy, open wounds, yet, it is also true that the continual exposure to gasolines in general so damages the skin as to make it susceptible to superficial infection; and we have had a number of complaints as a result of infected wounds of the skin of the hands, in which it was suggested that gasoline brought about the infection.

As for using Ethyl gasoline to wash the grease off the hands so as to cleanse an open wound, I should not have the slightest hesitation in doing this myself for I think it would be a good procedure and would be very much better in aiding healing of the wound, than to leave the grease and grime on the skin. I would hesitate considerably, however, in giving this advice generally to workmen.

If I were phrasing a reply direct to Dr. Redden, I should explain to him that there has been a suspicion (which has not been verified by any facts) that the absorption of tetraethyl lead added to gasoline if handled carelessly, might in due time give rise to chronic lead poisoning; that in view of this suspicion careful investigations have been made among men and upon animals to determine whether or not there is any likelihood of this occurrence; that no evidence whatever has been found that lead absorption in appreciable quantities occurs under these conditions; that, in spite of that fact, however, the Ethyl Gasoline Corporation has made it a matter of policy to educate gasoline handlers not to use Ethyl gasoline in cleansing tools or for any other purpose which brought about unnecessary contact of the skin with the gasoline, and that it looks with disfavor and

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discourages the use of Ethyl gasoline in the way suggested in his letter largely because encouragement of such procedure would tend to offset the attempts which had been made (not only by the Ethyl Gasoline Corporation, but by the United States Public Health Service) to educate gasoline handlers in the avoidance of any unnecessary contact not only with Ethyl gasoline but with materials which are intended purely for use as motor fuels.

If you do not wish to make your suggestion as strong as I have outlined above, it will be a very simple matter merely to set forth the facts and allow Dr. Redden to make whatever application of them he chooses, on his own responsibility.

I enclose herewith Dr. Redden's letter as per your request.

Yours very truly,

RAK:EJ
Encl

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