

March 15, 1939

Mr. E. R. Jefferis
The Union Pacific Coal Company
Rock Springs, Wyoming

Dear Mr. Jefferis:-

In reply to your letter of March 9th, I wish to point out that the accidental introduction of gasoline into the eye has caused injury in a number of instances which have come to my attention. This condition has nothing whatever to do with the presence within the gasoline of small quantities of tetraethyl lead, but is due to the irritating effects of gasoline which, as you probably appreciate, causes considerable irritation and pain when applied to any such delicate membranes as the covering of the eye. In general the injury is of short duration since the gasoline is promptly diluted by tears and is washed out of the eye very adequately. However the irritating effect is such that the person who gets gasoline in his eye will usually rub his eye and because of the fact that the hands of filling station operators are often unclean, this rubbing may result in considerable injury to the surface of the eye. Thus I have seen one or two instances in which ulcers of the surface of the eye were produced by this means. Such ulcers almost invariably become infected and if this is the case, a scar may develop which on healing may interfere with vision if it is in the central portion of the cornea.

Any injury to the eye as the result of contact with gasoline, which does not clear up within the first twenty-four hours, should be treated by a physician since otherwise considerable damage may result from circumstances like those I have described above.

Let me repeat for your information, that the lead content of the gasoline is not a factor in this process since actually tetraethyl lead is itself, even in concentrated form, considerably less irritating than is gasoline.

I hope by this time your employee has recovered from his difficulties. If he has not, may I suggest that you should see that he consults a competent physician for the treatment of his eye.

Very truly yours,

RAK:ls

Robert A. Kehoe, M.D.