

February 4, 1941

Dr. Graham Edgar
Ethyl Gasoline Corporation
Chrysler Building
New York City
New York

Dear Graham:

Your letter of January 30th raises a question which has come to my attention before, though not in this precise fashion.

I should hardly consider it necessary to advise analysts as to the details of filling a 50 cc pipette, unless there was some factor involved which would influence the accuracy of the result. Presumably every chemist knows that organic solvents in general are not to be taken into the mouth and swallowed. The same is true of concentrated acid and alkaline solutions, and yet I have not noted any advice with respect to the latter. If the question of danger from lead is under consideration here, one might as well recognize that this is not a hazard to be considered. The quantity of tetraethyl lead which can be ingested in handling commercial gasoline is entirely negligible, and is of no consequence so far as the danger of lead poisoning is concerned. The swallowing of a mouthful of gasoline, on the other hand, is a rather serious thing in that gasoline does violent damage to the mucosa of the intestinal tract. Generally speaking the worst thing that is likely to happen is that the individual will get gasoline in his mouth. This will be uncomfortable but it will be of no consequence, if he does not swallow it.

All in all I see no good reason for attaching a special note to instructions of this type, if for no other reason than that it will be misunderstood and will mistakenly be attributed to precautions against lead poisoning.

Faithfully yours,

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Robert A. Kehoe, M.D.