

May 22, 1931

Mr. H. C. Mougey,
Research Laboratories,
General Motors Corp.,
Detroit, Michigan.

Dear Mr. Mougey:

Thank you very much for your letter of May 7 concerning the use of lead paints. I rather suspect from the somewhat cautious tone of your letter that you are not aware of the fact that I have been for some time the head of the Medical Staff of the Ethyl Gasoline Corporation and a consultant of certain others of the General Motors family. I hope you will not think me presumptuous in pointing out this fact to you, but my intention in writing to you was to appeal to you as an expert in paints in order to find out for my own information whether the lead substitute paints as ground coats could be regarded as satisfactory from the point of view of a body manufacturer for the purpose for which they are used. I should not attempt to decide the question generally as to which of several methods of painting might be the best, but I would like very much to know whether there is a substitute for lead which you regard as entirely satisfactory.

If you would rather not answer this question, or if you feel that it cannot be answered at present, I shall not impose further upon your courtesy. But if you are willing to give me this information I would very much like to have your opinion on this matter. Naturally, I should not presume to make any use of your expressed opinion in any unauthorized fashion.

I believe you are quite right in saying that the dangers of lead poisoning can be entirely avoided when lead paints are used on car bodies. On the other hand, I am reasonably certain that for quick handling in an assembling or manufacturing line, the establishment of the necessary precautions constitutes a serious interference with speed and convenience.

Very truly yours,

RAK:EJ

N13153

GENERAL MOTORS CORPORATION

DETROIT, MICHIGAN

May 7, 1931.

Dr. Robert A. Kehoe,
University of Cincinnati,
College of Medicine,
General Hospital,
Cincinnati, Ohio.

Dear Dr. Kehoe:-

In reply to your letter in regard to lead poisoning, this is a very delicate question. Lead paints have been used for many years and numerous cases of lead poisoning have resulted. In some countries laws have been passed prohibiting the use of lead paints and in these countries substitutes are used. In some of the General Motors Divisions the lead paints are used and in others we use products free from lead.

When lead paints are used with the proper precautions the dangers of lead poisoning can be avoided. The question is still undecided as to whether the solution to the problem is to use lead paints with the proper supervision or to use lead free paints with less supervision.

Yours very truly,
H. C. Mougey,

HC Mougey
Chief Chemist,
Research Laboratories.

M:B

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KE 0012442

April 28, 1931

Mr. Harry C. Mougey,
General Motors Research Corp.,
Detroit, Michigan.

Dear Mr. Mougey:

I have recently seen a case of lead poisoning in one of the General Motors assembling plants where body finishing is done, this case being associated with wet sanding. I have had no responsibility for the patient, and in fact saw him by accident, but the event has aroused my interest in the hazards of this type of work. It has seemed to me that it is likely that the ground coats of paint applied to car bodies might be made without lead compounds. In this particular instance the poisoning, I am reasonably certain, came from the second ground coat of paint which contained in the neighborhood of thirty percent lead carbonate. I am curious to know if lead paints are necessary for this purpose, or if some substitute can be used which might prove to be almost if not quite as satisfactory.

I am asking for this information solely for my own purposes. I am appealing to you, not that I have any right to expect you to answer such question. However, if you choose to do so, I should be very much pleased to have any information you can give me. Allow me to thank you in advance for any information you may care to give.

Very truly yours,

RAK:EJ

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