

August 29, 1963

William Weingarten, M.D.  
Nassau Smelting and Refining Company, Inc.  
1 Nassau Place  
Staten Island 7, New York

Dear Doctor Weingarten:

I am pleased to have your letter of August 19, as the outcome of my correspondence with Mr. Warner of Nassau Smelting and Refining Company. It is a source of considerable satisfaction to me to establish professional relationships of this type which offer the prospect of productive efforts in preventive medicine and hygiene. It is extremely difficult, as you can well understand, to do anything very effective through other channels.

I am asking our analytical people to send the necessary containers and instructions to you promptly, and no doubt you will receive these promptly.

From your description of the operations of your plant and from my experience in such matters, I can offer a few suggestions for your selection of the 15 persons who are to be the subject of our first observations. I cannot visualize as you can, however, certain features of the operation of the plant which are of crucial importance in determining the severity of the exposure of the workmen to lead, especially finely divided particles of fume or dust in the air. One of these is the housekeeping. The cleanliness of the areas, especially those in which there are frequent or continual movements of people, equipment for moving or conveying materials etc. Another factor, of course, is the extent of the escape of fume from heated metal in the air. Still another (and one commonly overlooked) is the extent of the exposure of maintenance and housekeeping personnel, who often work with little supervision and a considerable degree of improvisation.

I would put the emphasis on two types of exposure - namely (a) the potential respiratory exposure of individual men to metal at high temperature, and (b) their respiratory exposure to dust from dross dropped on floors or areas or moving equipment and pulverized and then dispersed into the air by mechanical means including currents of air. One cannot be sure where dross and debris will be found or who will come in contact with it, without following it from its place or places of origin to its final disposal.

I am assuming, although this is not always justified, that the provisions of the plant for promoting the cleanliness of the workmen and in guarding them against the ingestion of lead when eating, and against unnecessary exposure to lead in the periods between the hours of work. I think it necessary to mention these matters, since the present generation of medical and hygienic supervisors tend to believe that respiratory exposure is the only significant avenue for absorption and are prone to disregard the importance of the ingestion

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of lead. It is of minor importance in the practical terms of industrial hygiene, because it is so easily prevented, in contrast with the difficulties of avoiding respiratory exposure. But it should not be neglected because it is easily accomplished.

It occurs to me that it may be useful as well as interesting to you, to have a copy (bound reprints) of some lectures which I gave in London in 1960, in which I have undertaken to condense the more important results of some thirty years of experimental (and clinical) work in the Kettering Laboratory on the lead problem. Accordingly, I am forwarding to you, herewith, this small volume.

It may also be of interest to you, in following up the applications of this information to the hygienic problems of industry, to consult the work originally edited by Frank Patty, but carried on largely by David Fassett and Donald Irish in the second, revised edition of Industrial Hygiene and Toxicology, a three volume set (in the second edition) of which the first two volumes are now out and will be found in many good libraries, published by Interscience Publishers (a division of John Wiley and Son), New York. The chapter on lead, in the Second Volume, was written by me recently, in order to bring up to date, in a practical manner, the techniques of industrial hygiene in the lead trades, with some emphasis on the medical techniques. I commend this to you as the best general advice which I can offer.

Cordially yours,

RAK:vr

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Robert A. Kehoe, M.D.

Encl. - Harben Lectures

copy to Dr. R. A. Kehoe  
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