TIDEWATER ASSOCIATED OIL COMPANY
CURTIS BAY TERMINAL,
BALTIMORE, MARYLAND

KE 0021150

Report on Accident at

Tidewater Associated Oil Company,
Curtis Bay Terminal,
Baltimore, Maryland

Tank cleaning at this terminal and the other plants in this division is done under the supervision of the construction and engineering department of which Mr. R.E. Benner is chief engineer of the eastern division with offices in New York City. Mr. Benner's assistant is Mr. [redacted], who is a graduate engineer and has been with the company approximately seven years, previously having been with Davis Chemical Company and La France Company, and is said to have supervised the cleaning of many tanks and always used all prescribed precautionary measures and was a careful worker. Under Mr. [redacted] are field engineers, one of whom is Mr. E.W. Dorsey. These men go to the various points and organize and supervise the tank cleaning operations and crews. The superintendent or foreman of the terminal, Mr. S.P. Wise, had no direct connection with the tank cleaning operations.

Early in July, Mr. Dorsey was at this terminal doing some construction work, changing pipe lines, and preparing tankage for fuel oil storage. At this time a fuel oil tank was cleaned and other work was done, and apparently it was suddenly decided to clean the leaded gasoline tank (T-1) for fuel oil use. This tank is an 80,000-barrel tank, solid roof and at the time of cleaning had five or more inches of water bottom. It had been in leaded gasoline service since 1933 (?) or since use of lead and there is no record of spiking. Mr. Wise however has been here as superintendent of terminal only about 2-1/2 years. According to Mr. Dees, Mr. Hogan of the Baltimore Division called on the terminal at least once the past year relative to tank cleaning precautions and was told notification would come from the New York office of Tidewater Associated Oil Company.

Sometime prior to August 3 another tank cleaning job was started at Rensselaer, New York. Mr. Dorsey went there to supervise that job "about August 6", and Mr. [redacted] remained at Baltimore in charge of the cleaning of the leaded gasoline tank (T-1). The weather was very warm and early in the cleaning Mr. [redacted] wrote to Mr. Dorsey that he should be very careful because of the temperature. It appears the reason these tanks are cleaned during hot weather is to convert them into fuel oil tanks since it is advantageous to buy fuel oil during the summer because of price structure.

The following is a brief day-by-day account of the work done from Saturday, August 3, until Wednesday, August 14. Much of this information was obtained from Mr [redacted] by Mr. Dees before Mr. [redacted] became irrational. Some of it from Mr. Wise, Mr. Benner, and men in the crew. Some of the crew made conflicting statements as to time but the following appears to be fairly accurate.

Saturday, August 3

Mr. [redacted], Assistant Chief Engineer, Eastern Division, "worked late at night" pumping out tank T-1. (Information from Mr. [redacted].)

Sunday, August 4

The tank was opened and entered. "Heavy stuff" was removed. Airline masks used. No definite information on number of men used. (Information from Mr. [redacted])

Monday, August 5

Tank T-1 steamed for nine hours, using railroad locomotive. (Information from Messrs. [redacted] and Wise.)

Tuesday, August 6

Mr. [redacted] one time said that the tank was entered on Tuesday. However, he later said he "didn't believe it was entered on Tuesday but that it was aired and allowed to cool." Comments of Curtis Harman also indicated that the tank was not entered Tuesday. (However, Curtis Harman told Mr. Benner and me that he entered the tank on Tuesday without a mask to see if it was gas-free, remaining possibly about fifteen (15) minutes. LJS.)

Wednesday, August 7

Tank entered with airline masks and walls "hosed down." Probably sludge removal started. Men were working about fifteen minutes in the tank and resting or working forty-five minutes outside of the tank. The schedule of time in the tank to time outside the tank was "maybe less because it was so hot." This was reported to be the usual schedule, although when especially hot "maybe men only worked ten minutes in the tank out of two hours." (Curtis Harman told Mr. Benner and me that on this day he spent approximately a total of one and one-half hours in the tank shoveling sludge and not wearing a mask. He thought all others wore masks. LJS.)

The impression seemed to be that six men were the total used in the tank. (However, nine different individuals were in the tank prior to Friday night.) Special clothes were procured for the workmen. "Believe eight sets." Clean clothes were not supplied each day. Boots were worn. Rubber gloves were not used

"because they crack and get sludge in them and are worse than nothing." (Information from Mr. [redacted] (According to information supplied by Curtis Harman clothing was purchased at noon Wednesday (about eight sets and no caps or gloves). From the statements of others some worked in the tank wearing their own clothing, and after taking a shower wore the new clothing home. One worker did not take a shower and continued wearing the same clothing after finishing work on Saturday. LJS.)

Thursday, August 8

Tank re-entered with men engaged in removal of sludge. One or more men entered tank without airline masks. What time and how many men indefinite. One or more men entered before noon without masks, but masks were in use during the afternoon. Question generally confused. (Information from Mr. Witter.)

Curtis Harman entered the tank Thursday morning without a mask. At ten o'clock he "knocked off." He "hated to do Witter that way but was going to get out of there." When Curtis Harman enters a tank without a mask, he "always takes a good chew of tobacco, and when the tobacco starts tasting sweet and funny", he decides it is time to get out. (Information from Curtis Harman.)

Tank not tested for gas.

Tank cleaning equipment packed and shipped to Mr. Dorsey at Rensselaer, New York, Thursday afternoon or evening, leaving Thursday night "fast express." (Information from Messrs. Witter, Wise and Harman.) (There is some question as to when the masks were cleaned and packed for shipment. One worker said that he helped shortly after noon to clean hose and do some packing. This may account for the changing position of air pump from on top of dike at highest point to on a barrel just about ten feet from the manhole and slightly farther from the open sludge pit. LJS.)

Friday, August 9

Tank entered without masks. Work of removal of material continued. Part of the day at least was devoted to sweeping of rusty material from the bottom. Water used on the inside of the tank, with Mr. [redacted] handling the hose. Mr. [redacted] worked "all day in the tank, that is in and out." Water played on the floor, at least some on the roof, as "it felt hot when it dropped from the roof," and possibly played on the walls. There was a "lot of water used." (Curtis Harman mentioned how "hot and dusty tanks get" but on direct question said "Witter kept lots of water going; I'll sure say that for him.")

One man said he didn't feel well and wanted to "knock off." He either stopped working or worked outside of the tank. Another man, a pipe fitter or a pipe fitter's helper, replaced him on the inside of the tank. This may be confused with Thursday and refer to Curtis Harman, or it may be another man.

Mr. [redacted] the last to take a shower Friday night, smelled fumes "boiling up in the shower room." When the "hot water hit" him, he felt bad. He asked the night watchman, Charles Harman, about all of the gasoline in there and thinks he was told that some gasoline had been spilled in the shower room. Mr. [redacted] "does not know how he got home but got home somehow and had some milk and orange juice."

Saturday, August 10

Mr. [redacted] went to the plant and his "men came in and said that they were sick." He called Dr. Rubin, "who examined the men." He got three more men and finished the tank"in a little while." "There wasn't much left, just finishing cleaning the floor in a small space just inside the manhole." When he got through, he "paid off a man" and did not remember to get a receipt. He was examined by Dr. Rubin and was told "to go on home and go to bed and he would be all right Monday morning." He "does not know how he got back home but got home somehow and had some orange juice and milk." (Information from Mr. Witter.)

The men who worked on Saturday were Albert Poole, Chester Hoe, and Charles Harman. (Information from Mr. Wise.)

Charles Harman was in the tank only about fifteen minutes, looking around to see that no tools remained. The other two men were "in about two hours off and on." (Information from Charles Harman.)

Saturday, Sunday and Monday, August 10, 11 and 12

Mr. [redacted] or Mrs. [redacted] called Dr. James G. Howell, their family physician for many years. Mr. [redacted] was confused about what had happened from Saturday noon on. He was worried about his men and, through Mr. Wise or Dr. Rubin, or both, tried to see that they were given care. Mr. Wise called on Mr. Witter Monday night to get help in making out the payroll. According to Mr. Wise, Mr. [redacted] seemed very nervous when he got there, but was pretty quiet by the time he left.

Tuesday, August 13

Dr. Howell called the Baltimore Division Office, talking with H.C. Dees, asking what the Ethyl Corporation had new on lead poisoning. Dr. Howell advised that his patient, Mr. [redacted] had been working on cleaning a tank the week before at the Tidewater Terminal. This is the first news that the Baltimore Office had of the tank cleaning. A call was made to Dr. Machle in Cincinnati, giving the names of Mr. [redacted] Dr. Howell, and Mr. Wise. Dr. Machle called back and advised that it was satisfactory to proceed with calls on Mr. Wise and Mr. [redacted] to learn what had happened. The writer talked to Mr. Wise immediately after luncheon, finding him

extremely rushed getting information for accident reports. The tank cleaning site, pits and shower room were briefly inspected with Mr. Wise, he supplying some information. Mr. Wise pointed out that the work had been done by an entirely separate department from that in which he is employed and that he was gone from the plant on Friday and knew little of the happenings. A visit was made to Mr. Witter between two and three o'clock Tuesday afternoon and information, as outlined above, obtained from him.

Dr. Kehoe called the Division Office during the time of the writer's call on Mr. [redacted] talking with Mr. Cronin. Upon returning to the Office, the writer called Dr. Kehoe in accordance with his request, outlining the findings of the afternoon. A call was then made to Dr. Machle at Dr. Kehoe's suggestion.

During the late afternoon a telephone call was made to Mr. Wise, who was too rushed with his accident reports to want to give any information. He did advise that all the men who were sick had been found and were under the Doctor's care. This, however, only included the following five men in addition to Mr. Witter:

[redacted]

Dr. Schradin arrived in Baltimore late Tuesday night.