

ETHYL GASOLINE CORPORATION

ATLANTA OFFICE
1420 HEALEY BUILDING

ATLANTA, GEORGIA

GEORGE W. WARREN
DIVISION MANAGER

August 31 1933.

Standard Oil Company of Kentucky,
Louisville, Kentucky.

Gentlemen:

Attention Mr. Closson:

I have read with considerable interest your letter of August 26th addressed to Mr. Hedgson on the subject of tank cleaning at Savannah, Georgia. I also note the copy of your letter of instructions dated September 5th, 1931, on the subject of "cleaning tanks that have contained Crown Ethyl Gasoline."

Monday morning, August 24th, Mr. Sutherland of your local office, called me and stated that he had been advised by Mr. Coons at Savannah, that there were six cases of lead poisoning resulting from tank cleaning. Upon several questions from me which Mr. Sutherland was unable to answer because of the meagerness of the report, he stated he would communicate with Mr. Coons and secure additional information, and again call me Tuesday, August 25th. During the second conversation, I became sufficiently convinced and concerned to call our Medical Department at Cincinnati and report the matter to them, and to ask that our Mr. Sanders call Dr. John E. Train at Savannah, and confer with him on the matter. This Mr. Sanders did, calling me back and confirming Mr. Coons's suspicion that the cases of illness were in all probabilities lead poisoning.

Immediately on receipt of this information, I left by car, spending the night at and arriving in Savannah the next morning at about nine o'clock, immediately with stayed in Savannah until Friday about two at

Upon investigation, I found that all the trouble had been occasioned by cleaning tank No. 1 by employees of yours together with employees of the Hammond Iron Works of Warren, Pa. From information given me, it seems that the last gasoline was drawn from tank No. 1 several days prior to August 18th, after which the tank was steamed for 96 hours and air forced through cans for 18 additional hours.

The exact number of employees sent into the tank to clean it is not known to me; but 4 Standard Oil Company employees, all colored, and 3 Hammond Iron Works employees, of which number 2 were colored and 1 white, were sent into the tank on the 18th to clean it out. On the 19th, one reported sick, and on the 20th, 5 more reported sick. Later, a seventh was taken ill but not sent to the hospital until later in the week. All employees were eventually sent to the hospital under the care of Dr. John E. Train an apparently capable physician. The Ethyl Gasoline Corporation's rules and regulations were grossly violated in that the employees were permitted to do this cleaning without the proper boots, clothes, and gas masks; our rules were further violated in that the tank was cleaned dry instead of moist as recommended by Dr. Kehoe.

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When I arrived on the scene, all of the above had transpired. Two negroes, employees of your construction company, were at work in tank No. 1, cleaning up two spaces on the bottom for approximately 10 feet square, for the purpose of experimenting with some paint. When I examined these two negroes, they were wearing canister masks, but were naked from the waist up and wearing old shoes which were literally filthy with rust and dust from the tank. The two negroes were scraping up with wire brushes large shovelfulls of a powdery dust, resembling rust, and throwing it out the large manhole, approximately two feet from the bottom of the tank. This dust and rust was flung on a concrete platform extending out from the bottom of the tank and the dust portions were flowing away with the wind.

Upon questioning your Mr. Smith, I found these two negroes were expected to be in the tank about an hour longer. I instructed him at that time to send them immediately to the showers, to remove from them the clothes they were wearing, to destroy the shoes and to send the overalls to the laundry. The overalls were of the variety from the waist down, leaving the negroes naked from the waist up. This Mr. Smith agreed to do, furnishing the negroes with new shoes and clean overalls.

After the above inspection, I went to tank No. 6 where the Hammond Iron Works had a rather large force- possibly 7 or 8 men- employed putting in a new bottom. Upon investigation, I found that the last gasoline was drawn out of tank No. 6 on July 13th, 1936, and steamed for three days- July 14th, 15th, and 16th. The tank was then opened for ventilation and remained that way until August 18th, approximately one month later, at which time it was cleaned. I am told the same crew was used in cleaning this tank that is at present sick in the hospital. After the cleaning crew was removed, Hammond Iron Works went into the tank and painted the bottom with asphalt and was at the present time welding in a new bottom.

I was in tank No. 6 on several occasions during the latter part of last week. I noticed a large amount of dust flowing through the atmosphere and that the workmen did not have the proper clothing and were not equipped with gasmasks. They have been working in this atmosphere for several days and I am at a loss to understand why all of them have not been taken sick, unless it is because the bottom of the tank was painted with asphalt thereby settling the dust to that extent, and because the workmen were working around on new metal, wide and long steel plates which are being used to make the new bottom. I told you over the telephone last week and am still inclined to believe that these men are eventually going to be sick, though I sincerely hope they will not.

After finding this state of affairs, I talked to our Assistant Sales Manager, Mr. C. B. Lewis, in New York who, in turn, talked with Dr. Sanders in Cincinnati. During a conversation with you over the telephone last week, you stated you had heard from Dr. Sanders and that he had written you a rather sarcastic letter. I have before me a letter dated August 25th which is copy of Dr. Sanders's letter addressed to Mr. W. G. Violette with copies to Oscar Lewis in New York, Harry Mack in Dayton, and myself. If this is the letter to which you refer, I fail to find any sarcastic phraseology. Dr. Sanders states that according to his information, "our requirements for this procedure (tank cleaning) were totally disregarded". This is a mere statement of fact. You further advised me over the telephone that my company was of the opinion that you personally had issued instructions to disregard our rules and regulations. This must be an impression on the part of my company with the exception of myself, for I know nothing about instructions you issued when you were in Savannah. I am told, however, that Mr. H. Coons reminded you on August 20th that the cleaning rules and regulations were not being adhered to; and I feel reasonably sure you observed this for yourself. But, no action was taken by you. This state of affairs were passed on to Mr. Lewis.

At the time we talked, it was agreed that no further procedure in tank No. 1 was

necessary as the work had been completed and that the men were not going back into the tank anyway. However, in the case of tank No. 8, you instructed me to issue any further orders I felt advisable and that Mr. Coons would see they were carried out. You also asked that I handle the Hammond Iron Works employees as discreetly as possible because of the contractual relationship between your company and theirs. Upon my last visit to the terminal with Mr. Coons, I found that there were little or no instructions I could issue. The bottom of the tank had been painted with asphalt and new plates, constituting the new bottom, were all in place. I did notice that the walls of the tank were exceptionally dry and had not been cleaned very satisfactorily. Large patches of scaley substances were noticed on the sides of the tank up as high as 3 or 6 feet. I attempted to inspect no further than that. I removed two square feet of this substance and have sent it to New York for analysis in order to ascertain whether or not it contained an appreciable amount of lead.

the object of this letter is not to place the blame on any individual or individuals, but to remind you that if practices of this nature are to be continued in the cleaning of tanks, serious consequences are bound to develop. However, if our rules and regulations are rigidly adhered to, I am positive that no unsatisfactory consequences will be encountered.

I would be glad to come to Louisville at any time and discuss this matter with you if you will but advise. Your company has a large number of terminal tanks as well as large bulk plants which in all probabilities are cleaned rather often. I imagine that somewhere in the Kentucky territory, a cleaning operation is going on practically all the time. I have noticed in cases of companies of the size of the Kentucky Company that frequently the management provides one or more persons, experts in tank cleaning, who devote their full and undivided time to this one operation, going from state to state, from terminal to terminal, where tank cleaning occasion may arise. These experts carry with them suitable boots, clothes, gas masks, gloves, etc. When a cleaning operation is handled in an efficient manner similar to this, nevertheless any difficulty been encountered.

In closing, I might state that Dr. Bitmiller of our Medical Department will be in Mobile on Wednesday, September 2nd, and from there will go directly to Savannah where I hope to meet with him and obtain any further medical advice he might have to offer.

Very truly yours,

George W. Warren

George W. Warren.

GWM/F.L.

CC- Mr. Lester W. Sanders, Cincinnati.
Mr. J. B. Lewis, New York
Mr. A. G. Violette, Louisville.
Mr. Harry Mack, Dayton.
Mr. R. E. Hodgson, Atlanta.

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