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NEWS From



Lead Industries Association, Inc.

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Look Ahead with Lead New York, N. Y. 10017 -- OR 9-6020

RELEASE

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Further Information

Don O. Fowler

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NO PUBLIC HAZARD FROM LEAD SEEN,

MEXIE SUBCOMMITTEE ON POLLUTION TOLD

Washington -- From results of extensive scientific investigations, "I can positively assert that lead constitutes no public health hazard in America today," Felix E. Wormser, former president of Lead Industries Association, today told the Senate Public Works Subcommittee on Air and Water Pollution.

Mr. Wormser quoted from the American Medical Association's February 1966 statement which, on the basis of "vast clinical evidence," concluded that "the general public is not now, nor in the immediate future, facing a lead hazard."

"Nor do lead anti-knock compounds influence the formation of photochemical smog," he stated, citing studies by the Midwest Research Institute.

He also cited a recently completed study by the World Health Organization conducted in 16 countries, including the United States, that found there has been no increase in lead contamination in the last two decades.

"More is known about the biological effects of lead than about almost any other air-borne substance," said Mr. Wormser, a former Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Mineral Resources. "It is one of the most thoroughly investigated areas in the field of air pollution and health ... There is

(More)

- 2 - LEAD INDUSTRIES ASSOCIATION, INC.

probably no metal about which so much is known in relation to individual and general health ... Nevertheless continued research on lead and its significance to human beings is necessary and desirable and is being carried out."

The lead industry itself has been in the forefront in stimulating and supporting research on lead in industrial and environmental exposures, he said. "Health and safety are matters of paramount importance to us in the lead industry."

Mr. Wormser's statement, prepared for delivery before the Muskie Subcommittee conducting hearings on air pollution, was given on behalf of the Lead Industries Association, comprised of both producers and consumers of lead, including manufacturers of lead anti-knock compounds. He discussed research relating to the use of leaded gasoline in automotive vehicles.

Lead anti-knock compounds, he said, greatly improve the efficiency of fuel, making possible high compression engines, and also preserve "a precious natural resource, petroleum, by making gasoline go much further than it would without these additives."

He said the matter of lead additives has been carefully watched since 1926 when an expert committee of the Surgeon General of the U.S. reported there was "no hazard to the public in the use" of such compounds.

A Public Health Service report in 1965 again confirmed "the fact that lead content of the air is low and does not constitute a public health hazard," Mr. Wormser said. The findings showed no increase in the past 5 years in lead concentrations in the air of three major U.S. cities -- Los Angeles, Philadelphia, and Cincinnati.

(More)

- 3 -

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"In one city, Cincinnati," he pointed out, "the trend in fact has been downward since the late 1940's, showing that increased gasoline use does not necessarily result in increased concentration of lead in the air."

Mr. Wormser told the Committee that "lead possesses unique physical qualities which make it an effective metal in important social, public safety, and utilitarian uses. Among these are radiation shielding from the X-ray room to atomic energy installations, insulating buildings against noises and vibrations, providing packaged power in the form of storage batteries

"For these reasons, a full understanding of any relationship of lead to the health of the people working in the lead industries and of the general public is essential," Mr. Wormser said. The Lead Industries Association and its members are continuing to conduct and support research to "learn everything possible" about lead from the standpoint of public protection.

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