

November 1, 1934

Dr. R. R. Sayers
Dept. of Commerce
Bureau of Mines
Washington, D. C.

Dear Dr. Sayers:

Thanks for your reply of October 25th.
I am beginning at once to prepare copies of our material on complaints of all kinds from the handling of Ethyl Gasoline, beginning where we left off previously with April 1932.

Perhaps I should call your attention at this time to the occurrence of a few cases of definite poisoning in connection with the cleaning of gasoline storage tanks which have been used for the storage of leaded gasoline at refineries. Quite some time ago we recognized the existence of danger in cleaning such tanks, and we issued instructions which were thoroughly distributed to the proper people. These instructions are quite adequate to prevent exposure to any of the finely divided dusts which are distributed in the air when tanks are cleaned in a dry state. In general, our instructions have been very carefully followed, and the technique of tank cleaning from this point of view has been very good. As usual there have been a few instances of neglect in carrying out the instructions, and there have been several instances of acute symptoms of variable duration, but without any fatalities. There is at present in the Boston Psychopathic Hospital an employee of Standard Oil of New York named Whitting, who is recovering from acute encephalopathy characterized mainly by mental symptoms. This man's illness was the result of cleaning tanks without taking the prescribed precautions. Steps have been taken to prevent the recurrence of incidents of this sort, but it is not impossible that other cases may be seen from time to time. There have been up to the present time two mild cases with fleeting symptoms at River Rouge, Michigan, three of a very mild and fleeting type at Savannah, Georgia, three of an acute type at Hartford, Connecticut, and this one last man at Boston.

These cases, together with the three which have been fully described in the data sent to Dr. Leake and which I have good reason for believing were not due to lead, are the only cases associated with the handling of leaded

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gasoline which in any way resemble or could be confused with lead poisoning. The cases occurring among tank cleaners, with two exceptions, have demonstrated quite definitely the magnitude of their lead absorption in that their lead excretion has been found to be many times that of normal individuals.

I have taken the trouble to mention these cases which I will describe to you in detail later, because the man in Boston has been seen by several Eastern physicians and the matter may be brought to your attention. It is possible that his poisoning may be attributed incorrectly to his exposure to gasoline. It seems best, therefore, that you have the facts at your disposal and I will report them to you as soon as I can.

With kindest personal regards,

Sincerely yours,

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Robert A. Kehoe, M.D.

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