

July 2, 1939

Doctor Francis D. Patterson,
Post Office Box 4061,
West Philadelphia Station,
Philadelphia, Pa.

Dear Doctor Patterson:

Was glad to receive your letter this morning and I am glad to make a few comments on the lead hazards in the plants at Philadelphia and Crescentville.

It is perfectly plain to everybody that the plant in Crescentville is much better from the point of view of lead hazards than the one in Philadelphia. That is well known to the management and it is largely due to the conditions attendant upon the newness of the plant at Crescentville and the fact that they are enabled to make only one type of battery. The hazards associated with the making of so-called Iron clad storage batteries are well known to be great, and as long as they are made I can see no adequate way of obviating these hazards other than by the use of respirators and by the inculcation into the men of caution patiently and continually carried out.

It is an easy thing to recognize hazards and it is another thing to do away with them. I personally feel that there is great advantage in knowing the exact magnitude of the hazards associated with each job, and in striving by every mechanical means possible for the reduction of these hazards to the point where it is known to be within the limits of safety. But I feel that as long as there are hazards that exceed this level it is advisable to have a somewhat closer check upon the condition of the men who are working than obtains in either of these plants. I believe it would be advantageous to have a sufficient amount of medical supervision so that blood smears could be studied of all workmen at regular intervals, and a limit set for the development of stippling which would automatically remove a man from exposure. This is a hardship to the men and produces something in the way of increased labor turnover, but is often likely to obviate the development of cases of poisoning. I should want also in addition to the supervision of the management in matters of safety, more or less continual criticism and supervision of a medical man who, by a practically daily inspection, would see to such matters as the wetness of the floor in keeping dust down, and the compulsory cleanliness and care on the part

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of the workmen, and any other matters which have to do with prevention of lead absorption. I believe this could be done. In fact, it is done in a way that seems to me to be quite satisfactory in the Chloride Electrical Works in Manchester, England, which, I must say, is the best operated and safest storage battery manufacturing plant that I have ever seen.

I recognize the difficulties of putting into effect such a regime as this in a country where there is as little compulsory care as there is in the United States. I recognize that very much in the way of overhead expense devoted to these matters constitutes a source of difficulty in competition with other and usually smaller concerns which take no precautions, and yet I am inclined to believe that the prevention of poisoning with its associated lack of labor turnover would prove to be an economical measure which would come very near to paying for itself.

The above comments are in no way a criticism of the men who, it seems to me, are wide awake both to their opportunities and responsibilities and who have the advantage of long experience in these matters. I am inclined to believe, however, that it could be made economically reasonable, and they would welcome the type of medical supervision at the plant itself which I have suggested. The entire elimination of the dust hazards, on the other hand, is a thing which would require considerable engineering skill and some period of time and study. It is largely a problem for the engineer and only very little a problem for the physician.

You will note that I have commented on these matters in a very general rather than a specific manner, which brings me to again say it is easy to criticise and much more difficult to give constructive advice. I hope, however, that you will understand the general trend of my notations, which are partly the result of my observations there and partly the result of some experience in other lead hazards. Allow me to thank you again for the courtesy extended to me by your secretary, and to express my pleasure in hearing from you again. With kindest regards.

Very sincerely yours,

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