

January 24, 1929

Mr. A. E. Mittnacht,
Ethyl Gasoline Corp.,
25 Broadway,
New York City.

Dear Mr. Mittnacht:

During my recent trip east Mr. Schaefer pointed out to me an incident which I think is prophetic. Since you are quite familiar with the incident it is unnecessary for me to refer to it in detail except to point out ~~that I mean~~ that I refer to the puncture of a drum on its way to Oil City and the spillage of some fifty-six pounds of ETHYL fluid on the floor of the car and on its contents. I had hoped that no such accident as this would occur, but since we now know that it can occur and that it may happen in the future, it is well, I believe, to take note of the fact and act. I believe therefore that in continuing the policy of making less than car load lot shipments the Ethyl Gasoline Corporation is running a risk which is too great to be continued. It is likely that there will be leaking drums, perhaps even injured drums, in car load lot shipments but the manner of handling this is so different that it does not constitute a danger which is to be seriously compared to that which exists in local freight shipments. The outcome of the repetition of such incidents as the Oil City incident is something which one does not like to consider. The possibility of serious injury not only to the handlers of freight but to persons even remote from such handling as the result of the contamination of food materials etc., is a serious matter and one which I cannot think about without considerable worry. I need not go into the details as to the possibilities for it seems to me that they are easy to anticipate. I wish to propose formally, therefore, that the policy of the Company be changed at once to do away with less than car load lot shipments. This will mean some inconvenience but I believe, after some conversation with Mr. Schaefer, that it could be put into effect at once. It would mean that in the case of small consumers of ETHYL fluid car load lots would be sent to them on consignment to be paid for as used. It would mean also (what is somewhat more difficult) that the storage facilities for ETHYL fluid at a number of mixing points in the country would have to be greatly increased. It might even mean that at one or two points where there is no railroad connecting with the refinery (if such exist) that the shipment of ETHYL fluid would have to be discontinued, but it would do away with several things which are a source of great disturbance to us at present. Some of our mixing plants are located badly from the point of view of the utmost safety both as to handling and as to fire risk. The only situations in which this is true are those at which one or two drums at a time are in stock and no considerable amount of space

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is required. If it had been necessary at the time of installation to provide adequate storage for a car load shipment of ETHYL fluid a proper location would undoubtedly have been chosen and our difficulty in this matter would not have been begun. At the same time the lack of uniformity in handling drums has led to platforms at ground level, truck level, and car level. The platforms which are at ground level are unsatisfactory, at least from the point of view of the hazard in rolling a drum down on a skid, a hazard which can by no means be ignored. Furthermore by this method the trucking of drums from place to place and in some instances through city streets (another risk which we have regarded seriously) would be done away with. I wish to urge, therefore, the speedy adoption of this plan.

I trust that I shall not be acting outside of my proper field in suggesting the possible influence of this program upon future contracts. It may easily be seen that this method of distributing ETHYL fluid may be an obstacle to the signing of contracts with future small handlers of ETHYL fluid. As much as it may be desirable to have small dealers, it cannot be denied that the elimination of these small dealers would be a great relief from the safety point of view. With one exception all the difficulties that have arisen in connection with the equipment for the mixing of Ethyl Gasoline have occurred in the case of the small dealers. These have not been serious difficulties but they have been troublesome and it is only natural that we should wish to eliminate as many of our troubles as possible.

I should appreciate very much your giving this matter the earliest possible consideration.

Very truly yours,

RAK:EJ

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