

May 8, 1944

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Dr. J. R. Meek,
Wright Aeronautical Corporation,
Cincinnati, Ohio.

Dear Dr. Meek:

Thanks very much for the arrangements you made to enable me to see your plant methods of handling gasoline. After looking over the setup, I am entirely satisfied that you are not dealing with any hazard from a toxicologic point of view in your manner of handling your gasoline. The mechanical setup is such that any dangers that might otherwise exist have been rather completely eliminated.

I had only one serious question in my mind in the whole situation. I refer here to the pit of the aqua system. I raised the question here as to what would happen if a leak developed in this pit, and if men were required to enter it for the purpose of making the necessary repairs. The response was that this would be taken care of by the safety department, which would not permit any man to enter until the conditions had been rendered safe. I did not take the time to inquire of the safety department as to what facilities were available for handling this problem safely. However, I do think it is worth a bit of inquiry on your part, since there are three problems that have to be taken into account, namely the fire and explosion hazard, the possible exclusion of oxygen by reason of low-lying heavy vapors, and gasoline intoxication. Even in refineries where they are familiar with these problems, a man is killed every once in a while by going into one of these areas without suitable protection. I dare say your people will know how to deal with this situation and will not require any advice from me. Therefore, I merely raise the question, and if you should want my suggestions, all you have to do is to ask for them.

The spot in which I was most interested was the carburetor testing benches. These are so much better than anything I have ever seen or heard of elsewhere that there is nothing to be said about them except commendation. I was particularly gratified to note that ordinary gasoline of a type that is low in toxicity is being used for the testing. The situation is entirely satisfactory, and it is only necessary for me to make one comment, namely, that if the situation were to change so as to make it necessary to use high octane gasoline for carrying out these tests, there would undoubtedly be some hazard. This hazard would

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occur not so much during the actual testing as during the setting up and tearing down of the equipment.

I would presume that the facilities in use at Paterson, New Jersey are similar to those in Cincinnati. If there is any doubt on this score, I should be very glad to visit the Paterson plant if the people there wish me to do so. However, if the facilities are the same and if the other conditions are similar, there would be no point in this. I wonder, therefore, if you would be good enough to initiate such inquiry into this matter as will satisfy your people at Paterson. Needless to say I am entirely at their disposal at some mutually convenient date if they should wish me to look into the conditions there. On the other hand, I do not want to waste their time or mine on any unnecessary visit to the plant.

I noted in passing a fairly strong smell in one of the rooms in which oil is being reconditioned. I rather thought that the smell was due to the chlorinated hydrocarbon stored there in drums and used perhaps for cleaning up the equipment. This was really none of my affair, and I had no wish to intrude into it by making far-reaching observations. I merely call attention to the point, since you may feel that it is worth while looking into it.

There is only one other matter that might be mentioned. I refer here to the liquid that is used to spray on the motors to clean them up after block testing. The man who does this work has a very considerable exposure to any vapors that might be present. It is probable that the solvent used is essentially non-toxic under the conditions of its use. However, I would consider it worth your while to look carefully into the composition of this solvent, if for no other reason than that it has a trade name which I believe is "Varcol." The manufacturers of these solvents sometimes change their composition without notice, and sometimes without recognizing that they are introducing a more toxic ingredient. I have very little doubt that your safety people have looked into this carefully, but it is worth while to check and double check on the specifications and the composition of this solvent.

Sincerely yours,

Robert A. Kehce, M. D.

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