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Lead in Air

We have now had an opportunity to review in more detail the Public Health Service Publication No. 999-AP-12 entitled "Survey of Lead in the Atmosphere of Three Urban Communities". As mentioned in our previous announcement to you, dated April 28, this report covers one of the most intensive air pollution studies ever conducted anywhere. Data from this study effectively corroborate earlier findings that the amount of lead in the atmosphere is very low, and as such does not constitute a public health problem in air pollution. The findings confirm and add to those of the National Air Sampling Network, revealing no increase in the concentration of lead in the atmosphere in these three cities in the last five years. In fact, data indicate that in Cincinnati the trend has been downward since 1946.

Recognizing that environmental data alone have limited validity as far as public health is concerned, the investigators included a human sampling program in the study. The results of these biological samplings show that there has been no significant accumulation of lead in the human body. Blood and urine specimens analyzed for lead were collected from groups of the population who have high, but non-occupational, exposure to lead. These groups included traffic control police, letter carriers and long distance commuters via freeways, all of whom had been involved in these activities at the same location at least five years. Mean blood lead values for these groups, expressed in mcg. %, (micrograms of lead per 100 grams of whole blood) ranged from a low of 13 in Philadelphia to a high of 31 in Cincinnati. Accepted blood lead normal values for occupationally exposed individuals are from 40 to 60.

In a limited study of persons with chronic diseases, no effect of these diseases on the blood lead level could be demonstrated. The range of mean blood lead values for the chronically ill suffering from respiratory, liver, blood and bone conditions was from a high of 24 to a low of 14 mcg. %.

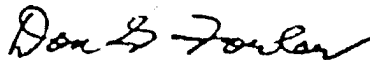


Lead Ahead with Lead

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A summary of the study was presented by J. N. Ludvig of the U. S. Public Health Service in Houston, May 7, at the Annual Meeting of the American Industrial Hygiene Association, and will be reprinted in an early issue of the Journal of the American Industrial Hygiene Association.

Because of the importance and timeliness of this report, we are taking this means to present to you some of the factual data contained therein. No public distribution of the report has yet been made.



Don G. Fowler
Director of Health and Safety