

25 July 1956 - 11:30 a.m.

MEMORANDUM TO DOCTOR KEHOE

Mr. H. B. Greenup, Operations Manager of the Central Regional Office, acting in the absence of the Chief Products Service Representative, called to report the following:

Four men were allowed to enter a leaded gasoline storage tank at Cooperative Refinery Association, Phillipsburg, Kansas, to perform mechanical work (no welding or hot work) without protective equipment. They worked in the tank for 15 minutes. This work was done on Friday afternoon, 20 July. A report of the incident was made Monday morning, 23 July.

The subject tank is a blending tank. It was cleaned November 1955, and result of the analysis of the atmosphere of the tank after cleaning was nil for lead. The tank was drained Thursday, 19 July, and drainage was completed by 10:30 p.m., the same date. It was then ventilated by air mover, the capacity of which was calculated to move the total capacity of the tank every 5 to 10 minutes. Ventilation continued from Thursday night until Friday afternoon when the tank was entered. The tank was flushed from the outside Thursday. W. F. Purcell, Products Service Representative was in attendance for the tank entry but acceded to the demands of the refinery people that the workmen be allowed to enter the tank without protection.

Since the report of the incident was made, inquiry has been made daily as to the state of health of the men and no symptoms have been reported.

Comment

Under the described circumstances it would be extremely unlikely that these exposed men would have absorbed enough lead

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to have produced appreciable changes. The exposure, therefore, is considered relatively unimportant. The circumstances of exposure are, however, of the utmost importance.

It is reported that "pressure was brought to bear" on the Corporation Representative by threats of buying from the competitor in the future if he did not agree to allowing the men to work without protective equipment. It is, of course, questionable if these threats were made seriously but apparently they were taken seriously. Regardless of all circumstances, judgment was made solely because of this alleged threat and this is reprehensible. If a Representative can be swayed by this kind of threat there is no point in his presence. Under other circumstances there might be serious results.

Mr. Basye, Mr. Purcell's immediate superior, has stated to the refinery management that an error in judgment had been made by Mr. Purcell and that if the Corporation could sell their product to this company only under the conditions of the safety measures determined by Cooperative Refinery Association in relation to tetraethyl lead hazards, he would prefer that purchases be made from the competitor company.

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Four sets of containers for sampling are being sent today by air express to Dr. Thomas F. Taylor, Health Center, Phillipsburg, Kansas. Samples will be taken as soon as possible after arrival of the containers.

Lester W. Sanders, M.D.

cc - Dr. Frank Princi

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