

Dr. Victor Brito, Creole Petroleum Corp.
Caripito, Venezuela

March 2, 1945

Copy by Air Mail

Dr. Victor Erito,
Creole Petroleum Corporation,
Caripito, Venezuela.

Attention: Dr. Agustin LaCorb

Dear Dr. LaCorb:

I have your letter of February 13, to which I am very glad to reply.

With respect to the booklet which you requested, I am asking Mr. Misso-Gill to forward to you the necessary booklet, together with copies of various articles that have been translated into Spanish. These articles give rather full information on the problems which are to be met and on the significance of the various opportunities for lead exposure.

I might supplement what has been said and written with a few comments giving the results of our experience over a considerable period of years in this field of activities.

First, let me point out to you that the mixing of Ethyl Fluid with gasoline can be a very dangerous procedure. In the early stages of the work in this country attempts were made to do it in a variety of ways that introduced considerable hazard into the work of quite a number of people. For this reason, we attempted to bring all of the hazards under control by the careful standardization of equipment and procedure and by careful instruction of all personnel engaged in this work. The result was the establishment of the present regimen, which includes the construction of mixing plants in accordance with carefully worked out specifications, and the issuance of regulations for every operation involved in the work. It is proper to say that if this equipment is installed properly, if it is kept in perfect condition, and if it is operated in strict accordance with the regulations, there will be no difficulty. However, recognizing that there would be an inevitable tendency otherwise to relax the precautionary measures, we have set up a routine of medical selection and reexamination of personnel, with two ideas in mind. First, we consider it necessary to select comparatively young healthy individuals for this work, making sure also by talking with them and instructing them, that they are reasonably sensible, reliable individuals, who being informed of the dangers, would wish to protect themselves by doing their work carefully and correctly. Second, the reexaminations should serve to pick up evidences of lead absorption, thereby demonstrating to the physician that the

KE 0013325

Dr. Victor Brito - (2) - March 2, 1945

methods of carrying on the work were being permitted to deteriorate. Under such circumstances we felt that the physician would look into the matter, would find out what was going wrong, and would see to it that it was being corrected. By this method of policing, plus periodic visits on the part of technical representatives of Associated Ethyl, we could hope to maintain entirely safe conditions in these plants. So far in this country we have been able to accomplish this purpose admirably, as we have not had a single case of tetraethyl lead poisoning in connection with these operations. Moreover, up to the time of the outbreak of the war we had no difficulties in plants under the supervision of Associated Ethyl. What has happened since, except in the Western Hemisphere, it is very difficult to determine.

I have attempted to keep in touch with all of the medical men engaged in this work, and I have wished all of them to communicate with me from time to time, especially if anything occurred of an unusual character. Therefore, I trust you will avail yourself of the opportunity to write to me again on any phase of this subject that may concern you in any way.

I should not fail in this letter to call your attention to one very important hazard, namely, that associated with the cleaning or repairing of gasoline tanks in which leaded gasoline has been mixed or stored. The opportunities for lead exposure in connection with this work may be very considerable, for reasons which are discussed in one of the articles and which are far too involved to deal with in a letter of this sort. We have developed regulations in connection with the cleaning of these tanks, and every possible safeguard should be thrown around this activity to the end that the instructions issued for the purpose of cleaning these tanks will be followed in complete detail. It is possible that persons engaged in this kind of work without suitable protection may be fatally poisoned, even though their total exposure within the tank may be very brief. Therefore, no exception should be made in connection with tanks that have been used for the storage of leaded gasoline.

I trust you will not have the opportunity of seeing any cases of tetraethyl lead poisoning. However, I wish to call your attention to the fact that from the clinical point of view this type of poisoning bears no resemblance to the ordinary forms of so-called chronic lead poisoning. You will be well advised, therefore, to study the papers that have been published on this type of poisoning. As I indicated above, if you do not have such papers, Mr. Nisso-Gill will see that you are supplied with them.

Sincerely yours,

Robert A. Kehoe, M. D.

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C.C.: Mr. C. L. Nisso-Gill

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