

May 28, 1965

Mr. J. J. Bloomfield
Pan American Health Organization
Pan American Sanitary Bureau
Regional Office of the
World Health Organization
1501 New Hampshire Avenue, N.W.
Washington 6, D.C.

Dear Jack:

The answer to your question about the significance of the contamination of the work clothing of the personnel engaged in mixing anti-knock fluids with gasoline, is very simple.

As a rule, to which there is almost no exception, these men carry out the mixing operation by means of very nearly fool-proof equipment, so that there is rarely any contamination of the clothing (which is white and so is laundered as frequently as may be necessary to keep it white). I am not familiar in detail with the mixing plants in Jamaica, but they are not greatly different from others. It is possible, of course, that an accident may occur, and the clothing may be contaminated. The fluid is tetraethyllead to the extent of 65 per cent by weight, and the remainder is made up mostly of chlorinated or brominated petroleum hydrocarbons - not exactly an innocuous mixture. The mixture is readily dissolved and diluted by kerosene, and hence the clothing is soaked in a bath of kerosene and wrung out, to eliminate all but minute quantities of the contaminant. This is done solely for the purpose of preventing the spread of the contamination, if there should be such, to anyone, including launderers. The answer, therefore, is that no hazard to launderers is permitted to exist.

In setting up this regulation, we thought it best to leave nothing to the judgment of the people concerned, as to the degree or significance of the contamination of the clothing, but to require this procedure regularly. I did not encounter any objection to it from anyone.

Sincerely yours,

Robert A. Kehoe, M.D.

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