FILE NAME: Painters and Allied Trades (PAINT)

DATE: 1974 Nov

DOC#: PAINT036

DOCUMENT DESCRIPTION: Article from Painters and Allied Trades Journal

Poisons Pose Health Threat to IBPAT Members

This is going to be the decade of job safety, General President S. Frank Raftery has said of our Brotherhood's goals in the all-important area of occupational safety and health.

To fulfill that goal requires the cooperation of everyone in our Brotherhood and industry. Already we have seen the Brotherhood's determination, in the innovative program launched at our 23rd General Convention to test our membership for on-the-job hazards through the cooperation of NIOSH and the Mount Sinai School of Environmental Medicine.

"Thus far we have enjoyed the utmost cooperation from management," President Raftery has said, adding that he intends to keep it that way.

Now, with this article, comes another vital dimension—the members of our Brotherhood who live and die with the problem of on-job safety and know of whence they speak. The following article was prepared by Carlos Miranda of Local 1232 in Los Angeles for the Western Joint Council of Paintmakers and the National Conference of Paintmakers.

It speaks for itself:

"Paintmakers" is a familiar term. But "toxicology" may prove baffling to some. Nevertheless, there is a connection between the two.

Simply put, toxicology is the science which relates to poisons, their effects and antidotes. It has a close relationship to the paintmaking industry.

Among those subject to chronic poisoning from corrosives such as phosphoric acid mixtures containing phenols and other mineral and organic acids are paintmakers, painters and paperhangers.

These corrosive poisons have a direct action at the point of contact and, in some cases, can be introduced into the body through inhalation, open wounds and by absorption through the skin.

Entering the circulation, a poison is carried by the blood to the tissues and other organs in the body and attacks them. The most damaging effects of some poisons are found at points of excretion, such as the kidney, urethra, bladder and colon. Some poisons show no effects immediately, but depend upon their solubility, method of introduction into the body and the rapidity of absorption into the system.

Since the introduction of latex paints, we have seen an alarming increase of dermatitis among paint mixers—so much so that many articles have been written to focus attention to this area.

Latex paints are unique in that raw materials that go into their processing contain two or more of these same harmful dusts and fumes that could enter your system during the operation of paint mixing.

Examples are some of the antimicrobial, antibacterial agents referred to as dowicides of various types. The active ingredients are phenylphenate, sodium pentachlorophenates, which are severely irritating to the skin, can more easily damage the eyes, and a strong solution can be absorbed through the skin. Small particles of this dust in the air, while in preparation, have caused a sneezing reaction in other workers at a distance, due to their irritating powers to the mucous membrane.

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