

September 6, 1951

Mr. K. S. Jenson
Chief Engineer
Prentiss Wabers Products Co.
Wisconsin Rapids, Wisconsin

Dear Mr. Jenson:

Just a few days ago, in cleaning up some of the accumulated material on my desk, I found an exchange of correspondence between yourself and my associate, Dr. K. V. Kitzmiller, concerning work which you had been doing, and expected to continue in the development of cooking equipment for the Quartermaster Corps of the United States Army. Dr. Kitzmiller sent this to my attention quite some time ago, and I had intended to drop you a note in order to explain, in somewhat more definite fashion, our interest in this situation. Apparently in the pressure of other activities, I neglected to follow through on this. Despite the extreme delay, however, it occurs to me that I might follow through at this time. If my comments should appear to be irrelevant, you need not bother to reply. If, on the other hand, work with leaded gasoline along the lines first indicated have been resumed, you may have some interest in my comments.

First, I have noted the circumstances under which you were preparing gasoline containing Ethyl antiknock compound, and I am sure that that end of the matter, under the advice of Dr. Calingaert and his associates of the Detroit Laboratory of Ethyl Corporation, has been handled satisfactorily. The precautions advised are of the standard type, and it is only useful to remark that it is of importance that these instructions be carried out with minute care against the possibility of intoxication from tetraethyl lead. If the precautions are followed as laid down, there should be no difficulties in this respect.

My concern with this matter, which inspired my original attention to it, arose from the fact that we were very much concerned during the last war with the problem relating to the safety of persons who used equipment in which leaded gasoline was burned as fuel. The problem was one of much more than academic interest, and we carried out some rather extensive observations on the cooking range that was used during the last war, so as to establish the facts and to determine whether or not conditions might arise which would create a hazard. This problem arises in connection with any equipment in which leaded gasoline is burned, but it applies with particular significance

KE 0009562

Mr. K. S. Jenson - (2) - September 6, 1951

in connection with equipment used in kitchens and in enclosed places generally, in which there is possibility of contamination of food, as well as the atmosphere, with compounds of lead. As soon as I knew that development work of this sort was under way, as brought to my attention through representatives of Ethyl Corporation, I was concerned to see that the experience and the information gained in the last war would be applied to any situation of this sort. Obviously after such equipment has been developed and put into use in the field, it is too late to find out its potentialities for difficulty and particularly danger. Because of the activities of this Laboratory in this field and also because of the responsibilities of myself and my associates for the dangers, of whatever type they may be, from the preparation and handling of loaded gasoline, I thought it wise to inquire into the situation, and to provide any information which might be useful in this relationship.

I regret very much that this matter has been delayed so long, through what must seem to be a bit of neglect. On the other hand, it is better perhaps to be late than not to comment on this situation at all. Therefore, if there is any problem involved in this in which you might wish to have information concerning past experience, or advice, I trust you will have no hesitation in letting us know. I presume that the information provided in the past has been made available to you by the Quartermaster Corps. On the other hand, knowing something of the manner in which military personnel change, I should regard it as entirely possible that this had not been done. As a consultant to the military establishment in matters of this sort in the past, and in a more or less informal relationship at present, I thought it to be my duty to raise these questions. I have no wish to intrude into your affairs, and if indeed there is no point to the continuation of this discussion, I trust you will have no hesitation in saying so. Certainly there will be no embarrassment to me in being told that there is nothing in this situation at the present time that deserves further inquiry.

Very truly yours,

Robert A. Kehoe, M. D.

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