

August 5, 1942.

Mr. J. R. Fitzgerald,
Lumber Mutual Casualty Insurance Company of New York,
44 East 42nd Street,
New York City.

Dear Mr. Fitzgerald:

Your letter of July 27, concerning a claim for compensation on the part of [REDACTED], has been forwarded to me by Ethyl Corporation.

We have had scattered complaints over a period of years as to the injurious effects of leaded gasoline. Most of these have been the result of skin irritation of one kind or another, some of which were actual cases of gasoline dermatitis. Others were various other types of skin lesions which in some instances may have been aggravated by contact with gasoline and in others were wholly unrelated to occupational causes. There have been other complaints from time to time of lead poisoning. Most of these have arisen from the fact that the illness of the claimant had not been studied properly and that proper diagnosis had not been arrived at. We have never seen a case of lead poisoning as the result of contact with or the handling of leaded gasoline. The problem presented itself originally as one which required considerable investigation, and a number of comprehensive investigations were carried out not only by the staff of this Laboratory, but by governmental agencies in the United States and Great Britain. The result of all of these investigations has been the same in that no one has found any evidence of lead absorption as the consequence of handling leaded gasoline, and no one has found cases of lead poisoning among refinery or bulk station employees and among the handlers of gasoline in garages and filling stations. We are quite certain that lead poisoning will not occur even after many years of prolonged contact with gasoline, since all of the experimental and clinical evidence indicates that the concentration of lead in the gasoline is so low as to give rise to only hypothetical lead exposure.

The question, therefore, in the case of your claimant is what is his present condition? If, as I suspect, he has some kind of eruption or breaking out on his hands and arms, it will be necessary to have him examined carefully by a dermatologist to determine whether he has an occupational dermatosis, or whether he has some other more common lesion of the skin. I should be glad if you would give me as much information as you can on the man's present condition and the manner in which the claim originated, since I shall be able to give you better advice as to

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What the medico-legal difficulties may be in the defense of this claim. I shall also be able to provide you with published information, although I can only loan you this material since most of it is now out of print. It will not be possible to introduce it into the record as a permanent exhibit, since I am not in a position to part with any of the published material. For this purpose, I am sending you under separate cover a volume which contains most of the published material from this Laboratory. In some of the articles you will find reference to public documents issued by the United States Public Health Service and the British Ministry of Health. I cannot supply you with these documents, since I have only my desk copies of them. Moreover, I think you will have great difficulty in obtaining copies of these documents, since the supply has been largely used up. However, I think the material I am sending you will give you the means of preparing the proper information, and perhaps, subsequently, I can supply you with some of the material from the governmental bulletins.

Finally, let me repeat for emphasis, that if this is a case of skin irritation, it may well be due to gasoline, in which case you will be dealing with occupational injury, and such an injury will be covered by the law, and presumably the claimant would be able to recover compensation, if his injury was sustained during his normal employment. May I further request that you return the book which I am sending you at the earliest possible time, since I can not allow this volume out of my possession for more than a short period.

Very truly yours,

Robert A. Kehoe, M. D.

RAK ef

C. C. Mr. C. B. Lewis
Ethyl Corporation,
Chrysler Building,
New York City.