

June 17, 1936

The O'Brien Oil Company  
Itasca Station  
Superior, Wisconsin

Attention: Mr. W. J. O'Brien

Dear Mr. O'Brien:

Your letter of June 2nd addressed to the Ethyl Gasoline Corporation has been referred to me for reply. I feel quite certain you have never heard of a case of lead poisoning in association with the handling of leaded gasolines, for during the period of years in which we have been looking for such cases, we have been quite unable to find them. Both experimental work and clinical studies have shown that lead is not absorbed as a result of contact with commercial gasolines containing low concentrations of lead. Moreover, during the period of now twelve years, since we have been studying this problem, we have not been able to find any evidence of a case of lead poisoning among any of the thousands of men who operate service stations and who work in repair garages.

I presume from the information given in your letter that the man in question had some type of skin irritation. As a matter of fact dermatitis, though not frequent, is not too uncommon among men who handle gasoline. The gasoline extracts the oil from the skin of the hands if there is frequent contact. This produces dryness and cracking of the skin so that secondary infection occurs fairly frequently. There are a few persons with sensitive skins who also get a much more serious type of irritation not only confined to the hands, as a result of contact even with gasoline vapor. The lead content of the gasoline is apparently not a factor in this irritation since gasoline bases themselves are more irritating than are any of the ingredients of Ethyl Fluid.

I should appreciate your letting me have any further information which develops in relation to this case, since we have been making it a point to investigate any significant difficulties arising in actual or supposed

Mr. W. J. O'Brien

relationship to leaded gasoline.

Very truly yours,

RAK:ia

Robert A. Kehoe, M.D.

cc Dr. Edgar