

24 October 1972

SEP 27 1972

Dr. J.F. Cole,
Lead Industries Association Inc.,
292 Madison Avenue,
New York,
N.Y. 10017,
U.S.A.

Dear Jerry,

I thought you would like to know that we looked after Vincent Guinee when he was here last week and although I couldn't go with him to the meetings which we had arranged with our Government people in London, he told me afterwards he had had very interesting talks with fairly senior people from the Department of Environment, Department of Health and Department of Employment (Industrial Hygiene Unit).

As you probably know, he spent a day in Birmingham and I thought you would be interested in the enclosed report which appeared in the Birmingham Post. Also enclosed is a transcript of a short radio broadcast about his visit.

I think Dr. Guinee enjoyed his stay in England and I hope that what we did will help you in your relations with him.

Kind regards.

Yours sincerely,


S.A. Hiscock

sah/pm

LIA-75011

Lead poisoning expert tells of children at peril in old houses

By BRIAN VERTIGEN

Birmingham Post Municipal Correspondent

Up to 80,000 old dwellings in Birmingham could have exposed young children to the danger of lead poisoning, one of the world's foremost experts on the problem said yesterday.

Dr. Vincent Guinee, Director of the Bureau of Lead Poisoning Control in the New York City health service administration, now heads a department that spends £812,000 a year on screening 10,000 children a month for lead poisoning — caused chiefly by children being in contact with paint containing lead.



Dr. Vincent Guinee, Director of the Bureau of Lead Poisoning Control in the New York City health service administration, points out to Dr. E. L. M. Millar, Birmingham's Medical Officer of Health, danger areas in property in Handsworth — where new paint has been chipped off and old, lead-bearing paint has been exposed.

Yesterday he was in Birmingham at the invitation of the Medical Officer of Health, Dr. E. L. M. Millar, and the Health Committee.

He visited houses in older parts of the city — Handsworth and St. James's — and gave a lecture to doctors and scientists at the Institute of Child Health.

Since he started the programme in New York City in 1970, about 280,000 children have been screened. More than 5,500 of them, aged between one and four, have been found to have significant levels of lead in their blood.

Dr. Guinee explained that his department's work is confined to the large older houses of the city because it was in these that large quantities of lead paint were used.

The houses, now multi-occupied, are a source of danger because the modern paint that now covers the old can be chipped off easily, exposing the old paint.

Eight days

In New York, every time a dangerous property is found, the owners are given eight days to get it right. If they do not, the city moves in and does the work.

Dr. Guinee pointed out that American paint manufacturers had themselves ruled in 1955 that paint for interior use should contain only one per cent lead.

Paint with a higher lead level than this had been banned in New York since 1958, but over the last two years, tins of paint with as much as 23 per cent lead had been found. Particular colours affected were yellow, orange and green.

He added: "In my tour of Birmingham, I have seen many areas similar to those in New York, and I feel sure that if you screen children in this city, you will discover cases of lead poisoning. It is bound to exist."

Danger had been found in other items, such as Christmas tinsel, paint on pencils and even dinner-ware imported from Europe. This had given off lead when a mild acid such as vinegar had been used.

Pilot scheme

Congressman John Charlton, chairman of the Birmingham Health Committee said last night: "The Health Committee has decided to start a pilot screening scheme in one of the older parts of the city."

"If, as I suspect, we discover cases of lead poisoning, we hope to carry out a much larger scheme in conjunction with the hospitals."

Attending yesterday's lecture by Dr. Guinee was Dr. D. N. Raine, chemical pathologist at the Children's Hospital. He has been trying for four years to secure funds to buy the equipment to screen children.

The equipment would cost about £8,000 and the staff to operate the screening in the initial stages, about £1,500 a year.

There are 75,000-80,000 older houses in Birmingham's urban renewal programme, which should be dealt with by 1981.

STATEMENT OF DR. VINCENT GUINEA

ANNOUNCER:

The dangers of lead pollution will be highlighted in Birmingham today with a visit to the city of a top American expert on this major environmental problem. He is Dr. Vincent Guinea from the New York Bureau of Lead Poisoning Control. This morning he will be going round a sample of houses in Birmingham to look at some of the dangers of lead for himself. Bob Warman has been finding out about the American expert from Birmingham's Medical Officer of Health Dr. Ernest Willard.

Dr. Ernest Willard.

Dr. Guinea has done some very important work in the United States particularly in New York on the lead levels in the blood of young children there. It has been found that a small proportion of children, round about 2%, have had really quite extraordinary levels of lead in their blood and although for the most part they don't appear to have become ill through this, we have a very serious feeling in our minds that a child with these high lead levels could be deteriorated mentally. We're going to concentrate particularly on the older houses where in all probability the walls have been painted because many of the walls, certainly in the kitchens, were not plastered they were merely painted bricks and the dampness tends to cause the paint to flake off and in these circumstances a child may be in danger of picking up these lead flakes and digesting them.

Bob Warman.

Is Dr. Guinea's visit an indication that there is rising concern in the city over lead pollution?

Dr. Ernest Willard.

...and you say that there is concern about lead pollution in the city over lead pollution? ...and you say that there is concern about lead pollution in the city over lead pollution?

LIA-75013

lead, we've only really taken notice of this in regard to the control of factories where lead is used, but in fact lead is all over the place in the environment and this being a poisonous substance, not only poisonous but a cumulative poison, that the body takes it in and can't get rid of it as quickly as it takes it in and this therefore is something that we need to look into very very carefully indeed.

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24 October 1972

Dr. V.F. Guinea,
New York City Health Department,
377 Broadway,
New York,
N.Y. 10013,
U.S.A.

Dear Vince,

We now have a transcript (enclosed) of a short broadcast on Birmingham local radio referring to your visit. It is much shorter than I was led to believe but I hope you find it interesting nevertheless.

It was a great pleasure to see you in London and I hope you found your talks with our Government people interesting and useful. If there is ever anything more we can do to help please let me know.

Kindest regards,

Yours sincerely,

S.A. Hiscock

sah/pem

LIA-75015