

Dr. Gomez Acedo,
c/o Compania de Petroleo Ganso Azul,
Casilla de Correo No. 2560, Lima, Peru

August 26, 1943

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Dr. Gomez Acado,
c/o Compañia de Petroleo Ganso Azul,
Casilla de Correo No. 2560,
Lima, Peru.

AIR MAIL

Dear Dr. Acado:

Mr. Charlie Risso-Gill has informed me of his conversation with you concerning the possibility of your acting as medical consultant for the Associated Ethyl Corporation, Limited, in connection with the new mixing plant at the refinery of Compañia de Petroleo Ganso Azul. I hasten to confirm Mr. Risso-Gill's arrangements in this connection, and I am very glad that you find it possible to undertake this work.

Under separate cover I am sending you certain published information with reference to the hygienic and medical aspects of tetraethyl lead and Ethyl Fluid. I trust you will receive these in due time and that they will provide you with useful information. I should be glad if you would acknowledge this letter and also the receipt of the published material when it reaches you. Also, if any difficulties arise in connection with your work or if any unusual questions come up, I shall do my best to reply if you will call these matters to my attention.

I think I should point out one or two matters by way of emphasis. Tetraethyl lead is a dangerous material which is absorbed through the skin as the result of contact, and which is also inhaled as a vapor whenever the Fluid is open to the air in the vicinity of human beings. As a consequence of these properties, it is necessary to avoid all exposure to the material. For this reason, special types of mixing equipment have been devised, and detailed instructions and regulations have been issued for the operations of the mixing equipment. No doubt you will be familiar with these general provisions before you receive my letter, but the thing I wish to impress upon you is the necessity of having the equipment in perfect order and of operating it in strict accordance with the instructions. If this is done, and if the workmen follow the instructions given to them, there will be no difficulties of any kind. We have been operating mixing plants in all parts of the world for many years, in this country since 1926. During that time we have had no difficulties among the mixing personnel, there having been no cases of poisoning among several thousand of these men

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in various parts of the country during these entire periods. The problem, therefore, is purely one of prevention. The medical supervision, therefore, is largely a policing job. In fact, it is quite clear that the discovery of signs of lead absorption in any of these workmen is positive proof that the regulations are not being followed. ~~We know that the regulations are not being followed.~~ We know that they can be followed and that there is no excuse whatever for injury to any man engaged in this work. It is primarily for this reason that we have engaged medical consultants in connection with all of these mixing plants. Our idea in this in large part is that medical men better than industrial management understand the necessity for careful preventative procedures. Our attempt has been to make the medical men absolutely responsible for the medical selection of workmen, for their re-examination periodically, and for the decision as to whether they can be permitted to continue in this work.

As you will see in the published articles which you will eventually receive, there is no serious hygienic problem in connection with the gasoline containing the normal quantities of tetraethyl lead. The concentration of lead in the gasoline when properly mixed is so low that the danger of skin absorption does not exist, and the danger of inhalation is insignificant. In other words, so long as the vapors of gasoline are kept within safe limits, there will be no significant or in any way dangerous concentration of tetraethyl lead in the air breathed by workmen. For this reason it is necessary only to maintain conditions which are safe from the viewpoint of intoxication by gasoline vapors.

There is one exception to what I have said above in relation to gasoline. I refer here to the problem of cleaning storage tanks that have contained leaded gasoline. Under the peculiar conditions that prevail on the inside of such storage tanks, it is possible for men who enter these tanks to come in contact with organic lead compounds even though the vapors of gasoline may be present in only insignificant concentrations. I shall not go into detail on this subject, since it is discussed in one of the articles I am sending you. The trouble arises, however, in connection with the sludge in the bottom of these tanks. Workmen must be fully protected against contact with the sludge and against the inhalation of vapors that arise from it. For this reason we have issued specific instructions in connection with tank cleaning operations. It is necessary that these be followed in every respect. In order to demonstrate to you that this is not an academic matter, I should like to point out that as the result of failure to follow these instructions properly in all cases, we

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have had approximately one hundred cases of serious poisoning with twelve or fifteen deaths in this country in connection with cleaning storage tanks. This is an important matter, therefore, and one in which you should make every possible effort to see that satisfactory instructions are issued and followed.

I trust that what I have said above will be of some assistance to you and I wish to extend to you my best wishes in connection with this work.

Cordially yours,

Robert A. Kehoe, M. D.

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