

February 9, 1938

Mr. W. E. Smith
Standard Oil Company (Kentucky)
Louisville, Kentucky

Dear Mr. Smith:-

I have received through a representative of the Ethyl Gasoline Corporation a copy of a letter addressed to you on February 2nd, 1938 presenting the facts with reference to the claim of one [REDACTED] Warrior, Alabama. The letter in question was written by Mr. M. C. Hines of your Birmingham district office and further enclosed letters from two doctors concerning the illness of the claimant.

As you doubtless know, my associates and I, on behalf of the Ethyl Gasoline Corporation, have been investigating all claims of injury in connection with the normal handling of leaded gasoline. In as much as this claim arises from the ingestion of leaded gasoline with drinking water, it does not belong in the category of injuries associated with the commercial handling and normal use of gasoline. Therefore it is not incumbent upon me as a matter of duty to investigate this case so as to report it to the United States Department of Health. On the other hand I am quite willing to give you the benefit of such advice and assistance as I can in this case though I would not meddle with it in any way except through a request from your company. It would appear that any claims which might be made against you in this instance would be based on some assumption of negligence and, therefore, I have no wish to be involved in this case in any way to your disadvantage. I might say that it is my opinion that lead could not be the responsible agent in an illness of the type described with reference to this claimant. The quantities of gasoline which would have to be ingested before a dangerous amount of lead could be absorbed, are such as to exclude the possibility of its occurrence. Gasoline itself, on the other hand, when mixed with water or when taken otherwise into the stomach and intestinal tract, produces a violent type of gastro-intestinal irritation and may produce certain types of nervous disturbance. I doubt very much, from the story told in this case, that the patient's illness was due to the ingestion of gasoline. On the other hand it is conceivable, and we have actually seen cases in which the ingestion of water contaminated with gasoline has produced irritation of the intestinal tract with diarrhoea,

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and with some hemorrhage associated with weakness, extreme nervousness, loss of weight, loss of appetite, and other evidences of general intoxication. We have never seen a case of paralysis from this cause, and from the symptoms described I am disposed to suspect that some more common type of injury to the spinal cord has been responsible for this man's illness.

If I can be of any service to your company in providing any further information for the interpretation of this case, I shall be glad to do so.

Very truly yours,

RAK:is

Robert A. Kehoe, M.D.