

August 14, 1940

Drs. Howell and Rubin were called on the telephone and the cases were discussed. It was learned from Dr. Rubin that one worker, Mr. Soboleski, had died during the night, and a number of other workmen were ill. All had to a greater or less degree the symptoms of lead intoxication but none, with the exception of Mr. [REDACTED] who was under the care of his family physician, Dr. Howell, was in a hospital. Most of the men were very nervous, were unable to sleep, had headaches and disturbing dreams. Some had vomited and were nauseated. It was suggested that they be contacted and if possible any who showed the slightest symptoms be sent to the hospital for observation. With the idea of being able to locate these men if it were necessary to see them at home, Mr. Wise took Mr. Dees by car to the various homes of these men to facilitate visiting them later. Relative to the contacting of these men I quote from Mr. Dees' report.

"A.C. Soboleski, who had been in the South Baltimore General Hospital, was reported deceased. Mr. [REDACTED] was reported as having been taken to the University Hospital. In attempting to learn the names of other workmen, as there had been "eight suits of clothing" and only six men reported at that time as having been in the tank, the writer drove Mr. Wise to the homes of three other workmen, John Riebsan, Curtis Harman, and Alfred Poole. Mr. Wise obtained information for an accident report on John Riebsan, as he was reported sick. Curtis Harman said that he had had a reaction but was still working at the DuPont plant. Mr. Poole was reported by a member of his family as working at the fertilizer plant and feeling all right.

It was then learned from Mr. Wise that Herbert Schmidt had been in the crew. His address was unknown and Mr. Wise promised to try to locate him. It was also learned then that Charles Harman, who was then working at the plant as yard man, had been in the tank for a few minutes Saturday morning. After lunch it was learned that Chester Koc had been in the tank on Saturday morning, making a total of twelve men. Herbert Schmidt reported at the plant early in the afternoon, advising that he was sick."

In the meantime the local doctors were contacted and it was learned that an autopsy would be performed at eleven a.m. at the city morgue on Mr. Soboleski. Suitable containers were procured and the morgue was visited at eleven in order to view the autopsy and, if possible, obtain specimens for analysis. Due to a new law in Baltimore this was not permitted so neither the attending doctors nor myself were permitted to be present at the autopsy. The medical examiner, however, said analytical work would be done.

While Messrs. Dees and Wise were locating the homes of the men I investigated the disposition of the sludge at the terminal. It was found to have been deposited in three open pits, one of which was larger and located beside the cleaned tank. It contained the bulk of the heavy sludge which was bucketed from the tank, while the other two, some distance from the tank, contained water and lighter material which was pumped from the tank. (An attached chart will show the approximate distances.) Within 10-15 feet from the sludge pit nearest the tank (approximately 10 feet from the tank) there was a distinct odor of decomposed lead, and this odor also was observed when on top of the nearby dike (approximately 15 feet above the pit). Immediate arrangements were made to have the pits covered. The two men who were to do this work were to wear gloves, boots, clean clothes, and canister gas masks, all of which were provided. They were to cover the pit nearest the tank first and then proceed to cover the remaining two pits and turn over the soil between the tank and the pit after first covering the sludge and contaminated soil with generous quantities of lime. This work was left to the supervision of Mr. Dees, who had Mr. Cronin present during the time required to do the work, it being Friday before work was reported nearing completion. Sludge samples were obtained and expressed to the Kettering Laboratory for analysis (see attached letter).

The total number of men involved in the tank cleaning operations were found to be twelve - some additional men having been hired for work on August 9 and 10 after some of the original crew became ill. Two other men had been working about the plant during the week, but from history obtained had not been in the tank and had insignificant exposure. Their names were [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] (Attached is a list of the men involved obtained from the payroll at the plant and furnished by Mr. Wise.)

At noon, after talking with Dr. Howell, a visit was made to the University Hospital where Mr. [REDACTED] had been taken. Dr. Maurice Pincoffs was contacted and the case discussed. Mr. [REDACTED] was irrational and it was impossible and inadvisable to attempt to obtain any history from him. Adequate treatment had been instituted on his arrival at the hospital on the morning of the 14th. The cases were discussed with Dr. Wilkerson, who was in charge of the remaining men involved, and it was learned that four men were admitted to the South Baltimore Hospital for observation on the afternoon of the 14th. These men were:

[REDACTED]

Later another worker, John [REDACTED] was hospitalized at the South Baltimore General Hospital for observation on August 16.

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During the afternoon of the 14th Mr. Benner, Chief Engineer of the Eastern Division of Tidewater Associated, arrived from New York, and later the entire situation was discussed with him.

During the following two days visits were made during the mornings, afternoons and nights to the hospitals to observe the patients and such histories were obtained as were possible without unduly exciting them. A number of discussions were held with Mr. Benner and Mr. Dees. Samples of blood and urine were obtained from each patient in the hospitals for Pb analysis.

Mr. Oscar Lewis arrived from New York on August 15, and he and Mr. Dees visited the terminal and later Mr. Lewis was seen at the hotel. The possibility of securing a section of hose from the airline mask that was used in the tank cleaning operation was discussed with Mr. Benner and Mr. Lewis. The hose is to be inspected and any portion that has poor or a broken covering is to be obtained. Also, if possible to differentiate between the sections, that portion which was dragged through the sludge is to be obtained. (See attached letter.)

During the afternoon and evening of August 15 three men from the terminal who did some work in cleaning the tank but were not hospitalized were examined. They were:



None showed any evidence of abnormal lead absorption. Spot urine samples were obtained from each for Pb analysis.

Dr. John M. McDonald, Director of Bureau of Occupational Diseases, Baltimore City Health Department, called at the hotel with Mr. Wilmer H. Schulze, Director of Sanitary Section, Baltimore City Health Department, and discussed the accident in its general aspects. They appeared satisfied it was purely an accident.

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