

July 29, 1971

W. F. Hartfiel, M.D.
American Hoist & Derrick Company
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55107

Dear Doctor Hartfiel:

I am glad to give you the advice requested in your letter of July 27. Let me say that your Company's safety director is on the right track, and in general, the advice which he has given is good - of the orthodox character. He is not, however, familiar, in the sense of understanding, with the problem of preventing lead poisoning in various occupational types of exposure to lead. The previous attitude was that, since no one understood fully the degree of hazard to which workmen were subjected, one should take no chances, but make his critical observations at certain conventionally established intervals, so as not to make any error of oversight. At present, we undertake to know enough about the exposure of workmen in the various occupations in which they engage, under certain physical conditions of ventilation and housekeeping, as well as the items of personal performance (cleanliness, avoidance of swallowing lead in dirty eating places, in smoking and the like), so that after one or more preliminary analysis of their blood and/or urine, we can relate the periodicity of the analytical work to the facts of the severity of the exposure. A physician should look after the men and know how they behave, and what their physical condition is. These examinations need not be more frequent than the severity of their exposure requires.

With these matters in mind, I never pronounce on the periodicity of analytical or clinical examinations until I have some idea of the risk associated with their work, whether it is lead or something else. A physician's judgment in these matters, assuming that he knows enough to have a basis in judgment, is infinitely better than a senseless routine established by law or habit. That is precisely where government alone is at fault. No rule as such will protect workmen, but sober attentive thought based on knowledge will protect them. The industry should be wiser than the government and so take care of its own affairs - within the law, to be sure, but not in dependence upon the law for a show of wisdom.

I believe, from what I have seen thus far, that your men engaged in spray-painting are fairly well protected. Even so, they should be looked at, from the point of view of their health, periodically, and I believe their blood should be analysed at least once per year, lest someone of the group should fall into careless ways of working and looking after himself. This, I think, is cheap insurance. Only you, or some other physician who keeps in close touch with them, knows whether an analysis should be made sooner. A full year is a long time, and should a man get into difficulty in the course of his work, he will show signs earlier. Not necessarily all men in a group, but the occasional man, may need to be checked on. This is the whole purpose of medical supervision in the lead trades, and many another - that is, to do what is necessary, without being a busy body.

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Not only is this type of regimen beneficial to the individual workman, in preventing illness, but it is excellent insurance against having expensive cases of poisoning, but also against expensive claims of injury which requires diagnosis.

Let me tell you, and your Safety Director, that the Laboratory is prepared to carry out and interpret analytical work, whether I am here or not. I am willing, however, despite the fact that I have retired from the Direction of the Laboratory and its work, to give you advice and guidance whenever I can do so.

Sincerely yours,

Robert A. Kehoe, M.D.
Professor Emeritus of
Occupational Medicine

RAK:wb

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July 27, 1971

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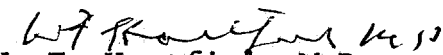
Dear Doctor Kehoe:

You will find attached a copy of the letter that our new Safety Director sent on to the Cleveland Trencher with a copy to Mr. Fox. You will note Mr. Fox's note, "Has something new been added?"

Would you be kind enough to give us some advice on No. 3 of the letter in which Mr. Krug states: "Employees exposed to lead content paint and sprays should have annual blood test taken by the plant selected physician." In my previous correspondence with you it was my impression that you very seldom found lead poisoning at all in spray painters unless they failed to use their respirators properly. I know here at the Hoist we have had people work for 20 years, and when we sent their blood samples in to your Department to be tested they were normal.

Would you be kind enough to advise us as to how often you think these employees should have blood tests taken. I think what I am trying to say is that we want to be sure to do them often enough but not any oftener than is necessary. You might also comment on how often it will be necessary to report these findings under the new Occupational Safety & Health Act.

Sincerely yours,


W. F. Hartfiel, M.D.

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