

ETHYL GASOLINE CORPORATION

CHRYSLER BUILDING
405 LEXINGTON AVENUE

SAFETY COMMITTEE

NEW YORK

October 4, 1937

O. B. LEWIS
CHAIRMAN

MEMORANDUM TO - Dr. R. A. Kehoe ✓
Dr. G. Edgar
Mr. H. W. Kaley
Mr. John Schaefer

Gentlemen:

The following is a report by Joe Costello on the incident that occurred in tank cleaning at Jacksonville, Florida:

"The following concerns the incident which occurred at Jacksonville during the past week where it was reported that one of the employees of the Standard Oil Company of Kentucky had shown evidences of unusual illness after having worked in a tank at the Talleyrand Avenue Terminal which was being cleaned.

"The first information that we had of this case was reported to John Murphey Monday, September 27th. The work of cleaning the tank began Monday, September 20th, and continued until Wednesday, September 22nd. At the time that this tank was cleaned, 11 men were employed, 7 of whom worked inside the tank and, in addition, the foreman Mr. B. C. Dowling, had occasion to go inside the tank after it was cleaned to inspect the welding work which was done. Of the men employed in this work, there were only 3 who were regular employees of the Standard Oil Company of Kentucky - the foreman and 2 terminal employees. The others were hired for the job, and none of them had had any previous experience in this work. There were also 2 welders who were in the tank after it had been cleaned, to make some necessary repairs. Mr. McCoolley was present when the tank cleaning began and observed the complete operation until the time the work was completed. He saw to it that the men wore all the equipment required in our regulations and also, in several instances, required some of the men who had gotten what he considered unnecessarily dirty, to wash and change their clothing during the operation. At the time he made his report, he stated that it was his opinion that due to the fact that these men were not trained in tank cleaning, they had considerable difficulty in becoming accustomed to the masks and other equipment, and he was hard put to keep them from getting dirt from the tank on their skins after they had come out. This was due to their inexperience in handling themselves under conditions where they had to be careful to keep soiled clothing from coming in contact with their hands and faces. However, the work progressed satisfactorily and at the time it was finished, there was no indication that any of the men had been exposed in any degree whatever.

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"At the time that John Murphey was informed that one of the men had become ill, which was the following Monday, he was told that this man, [REDACTED] one of the temporary employees, had not been able to sleep for several days following the day he had been working in the tank. The Standard Oil Company did not take it seriously and requested [REDACTED] to make no report of it. However, since this sleeplessness and excessive nervousness indicated the possibility of occupational illness, Mr. [REDACTED] insisted upon reporting it to this office. This information, of course, was transmitted to you and after I received your instructions, both Mr. McCooley and I got to Jacksonville the following morning.

"After talking the matter over with Mr. John Downing, the District Manager, who has supervision over the Talleyrand Terminal, it was decided that [REDACTED] who was evidently ill, and [REDACTED] who had also complained of inability to sleep, should be examined by the Standard Oil Company's doctor, Dr. C. R. Wilcox. In addition, it was also decided that all of the other men who had taken part in the cleaning of the tank and who had since been laid off, should be re-employed the following morning on some made work in order that we would be able to get a check on their physical condition without unduly alarming them. After Dr. Wilcox had made his report, it was indicated that [REDACTED] was in good health and that [REDACTED] was not. I reported his findings by telephone to Dr. Machle in Cincinnati. On Dr. Machle's instructions, I asked Standard Oil Company to hold these 2 men in the company so that they could be reached later and also to keep all the other men involved, working. This was done in order that all of these men would be available when Dr. Kitzmiller arrived in Jacksonville the next day.

"Upon the arrival of Dr. Kitzmiller, he made such examinations as he considered necessary and reported that there was no indication that either of the men in question had been affected in any way. Evidently, [REDACTED] nervous system had been very badly upset by the affect of wearing a mask and also by the noise which was made inside of the tank while he was working there. A more complete report on his condition will probably be made by Dr. Kitzmiller.

"Upon completion of the doctor's report, it was suggested that Standard Oil Company continue to employ [REDACTED] at least for a short time, in order for him to get over the condition from which he was suffering and not unduly exaggerate it by turning him loose again without employment. This the Standard Oil people agreed to do and they also agreed to keep the other men working for another day in order that they could be observed further. McCooley remained in Jacksonville to keep check on all of these men for another day at the suggestion of Dr. Kitzmiller. Dr. Kitzmiller and I returned to Atlanta last night.

"It is the observation of both McCooley and myself that the Standard Oil Company of Kentucky is badly in need of a crew of trained men to handle their tank cleaning operations. In this vicinity, it so happens that at their terminal points they employ so few men, that they are not able to get together a crew of their own employees who have had any experience whatever in refinery practices to do a tank cleaning job. It is necessary for them to go outside and, at the present time, due to the condition of the labor market, hire what are practically boys with nothing but farm experience to do this tank cleaning work. The Company knows nothing about their health nor do they have any information as to how they will react to this type of work. Aside from the difficulty of instilling in them the need of protecting their health, there is

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"always the danger of some unusual occurrence such as this one, which complicates our safety problems. It is my intention to call this matter to the attention of the people in Louisville within the next few weeks, during which time I expect to see Mr. Violette, if you concur with this opinion. I realize you are probably in better position to point it out to the people in Louisville than we are here in Atlanta. So far as the Jacksonville District is concerned, they gave us every cooperation and we in turn made every effort not to unduly burden them in handling the matter. I feel that in the future, they are going to be even more safety conscious as a result of this little scare.

"I trust you appreciate it was not our desire to magnify this incident, but rather to keep on top of it to be sure that we were on the safe side. I am sure the fact that Mr. McCooley was present during the tank cleaning operation and also the fact that he insisted on their carrying out our health regulations to the letter, played a large part in protecting the health of the men involved in the work."



O. E. LEWIS

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