

February 23, 1929

Mr. A. E. Mittnacht,
Ethyl Gasoline Corp.,
25 Broadway,
New York City.

Dear Mr. Mittnacht:

I have looked over your letter of February 18 quoting from Mr. Ronan in Texas.

I do not believe that there is anything Mr. Ronan can do about the matter but I should be pleased to write to Dr. Adams and give him the information which we have on this subject. Meanwhile there is one thing as to the general practise of wearing gloves while handling gasoline which might receive some attention. I am convinced that it is better to handle gasoline with bare hands than with any kind of cloth gloves for skin surfaces covered with any kind of cloth are much more easily injured by gasoline than if they were entirely bare. The gloves are not only not of protection but are a real source of injury.

I do not see any evidence in any of these instances of any injury due to the ingredients of Ethyl Gasoline and I do not see how it is possible to arrive at any conclusion on these matters except by more or less general observation. In the course of our field examinations we have not found any other large number of cases of dermatitis or skin irritation in the cases of handlers of gasoline, other than a considerable dryness of the skin which is usually confined to the hands and wrists. It will be a matter of some importance if the present gasolines which differ somewhat from the gasolines in use prior to 1926-27 by reason of the cracked factions, should be found to be bringing about a much higher incidence of dermatitis and skin irritation. We have no very good way of telling just what proportion of persons are sensitive to gasoline, but it is reasonably certain that a fair number of persons as result of the injury to the skin brought about by the removal of oils from the skin, will produce a condition whereby infections of the skin are readily produced. We have found fungus infection of the skin in a number of these instances which have come to our attention. There is, of course, no reason for calling these cases lead poisoning, they are simply dermatitis from contact of the skin with irritating substances. They have exactly the same significance that dermatitis from other causes has in that they are irritating, itchy, unsightly and productive of very much greater disturbance to the individual because they are seen than their severity justifies.

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We shall pay especial attention to this subject of dermatitis in our next investigation. Meantime we shall wish to see as many of the cases of complaints of any kind as we are enabled to do. I do not believe we are justified in running down each one of these in distant parts of the country, but we must keep a record of them all and obtain as much information as possible about them. Animal experimentation will help us very little in this field, so that we shall have to depend entirely upon observation of men. It will probably be several years before we have the necessary information.

Please keep me informed on all complaints of this sort that turn up and we shall do our best to obtain all the knowledge on the subject that we can.

Very truly yours,

RAK:EJ

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