

October 20, 1937

Mr. J. A. Costello
Ethyl Gasoline Corporation
Room 501-Rhodes-Haverty Bldg.
Peachtree-Forsyth-Williams Street
Atlanta, Georgia

Dear Mr. Costello:-

Replying to your letter of October 11th, this is to acknowledge receipt of the samples of water from the well at Daisy, Georgia. We will analyze the samples for their lead content and the results will be reported later for your information.

The contamination of drinking water with gasoline has occurred in a number of instances in various parts of the country. We have had occasion to examine several persons and to make several analyses on water so contaminated. Without entering into a lengthy discussion of the matter, it may be said that the most serious difficulty to be anticipated is from the gasoline in the water. If water contaminated with gasoline is used for drinking purposes, illness may result to varying degrees, dependent upon the quantity of gasoline taken and the period of time over which the practice continue. For example, we have seen one woman who drank water that tasted strongly of gasoline, who developed an acute gastro-intestinal irritation with diarrhea and profound weakness. She also developed considerable general nervous system disturbance, all of which was the result of ingestion and absorption of gasoline. In general it may be said that the quantities of lead involved here are so small, while the quantities of gasoline are so relatively large, that one would not expect to see injury from the lead. Apparently, however, even the distributors of gasoline do not realize how toxic a material it really is. The ingestion of even small quantities of gasoline can produce very serious damage to the alimentary tract, and can also produce general symptoms which may resemble drunkenness from alcohol, or which may produce a state of extreme irritability and excitation.

The contamination of a well is a serious matter for it is particularly difficult to get rid of the gasoline so as to make the water

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potable eventually. I think, therefore, that Mr. McCoolley was wise in advising that the well be abandoned and filled in, for it will probably be months before the water would be satisfactory for use again, if ever. In this instance the leak must have been close to the well since the water contained considerable quantities of colored gasoline. In our previous experience, the gasoline has had to leach through the ground for a considerable distance before reaching the water. Under these conditions it lost not only most of its color, but also most of its lead.

You would be wise to inform the representatives of the Standard Oil Company that under no circumstances should they encourage people to drink water that tastes of gasoline. Any concentration of gasoline that can be tested in water is sufficient to produce toxic symptoms.

Very truly yours,

RAK:is

Robert A. Kehoe, M.D.

CC Mr. Lewis