

November 28, 1949

Dr. John M. Mc Donald, Director,
Division of Industrial Hygiene,
Florida State Board of Health,
Jacksonville, Florida.

Dear Doctor Mc Donald:

Your letter of November 7 has been lying on my desk too long, and I apologize for the delay in replying. Unfortunately I have had to be away a great deal lately, and my desk work has suffered greatly.

The problem which presents itself in the Miami center of Eastern Airlines is one we have seen on a somewhat similar scale in a number of instances. A number of the airlines have come to us directly, or indirectly through Ethyl Corporation, for advice and help, usually in connection with some complaint or illness on the part of an employee. In general, what we have found has been a disregard of the precautionary measures which would normally be taken by employees of the petroleum companies in the handling of fuels. We have not seen cases of lead poisoning, but we have seen gasoline intoxication and gasoline dermatitis. We have made one or two investigations, and occasionally, we have found a person with some slight elevation of his lead absorption.

The Miami situation was called to our attention some weeks ago by a representative of Ethyl Corporation, and recently my associate, Doctor Kitzmiller, went down to look into the matter with some care. On his return, I talked with him very briefly, and I am still not fully acquainted with all of the results of his observation and discussion with the local people. However, he did tell me that the situation was such that we could obtain complete cooperation of the personnel of Eastern Airlines for a comprehensive investigation of their entire situation, on the basis of which we might make comprehensive recommendations for the avoidance of their difficulties. I looked at this as an excellent opportunity for us to obtain comprehensive information on a subject on which we have only occasional and fragmentary data. In such an investigation we should be very glad to cooperate with you in any way that may be possible, and I should like to have your reaction as to the manner in which this could be done.

I think I should tell you that we shall be disposed to regard this as an experimental survey, for our own information and for the information of the entire industry involved, rather than a seriously hazardous problem that needs immediate solution. I

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think you will realize from the nature of our association with this industry over a period of years that if there had been serious difficulties, we could not have escaped knowledge of them. I think, therefore, that it is fairly clear that there is no very serious lead hazard, and that the problem can be dealt with quite easily when we are able to bring clearly to the minds of the responsible people the nature of the hazards with respect to both gasoline and lead. We expect to plan for our investigation in the very near future, and therefore I should be glad to have your comments at your early convenience.

Sincerely yours,

Robert A. Kehoe, M. D.

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