

March 12, 1929

Dr. Elizabeth B. Bricker,
Chief, Hygiene and Sanitation Section,
Department of Labor and Industry,
Harrisburg, Pa.

Dear Dr. Bricker:

I thank you for your letter of March 7 in regard to an employe of the Sawyer Auto Sales Company. If any other information comes to your hand in this matter I should be glad to receive it.

I certainly share your doubts as to whether the man's injury was lead poisoning. For some reason physicians seem to forget, if they have ever known, that gasoline is an extremely irritating substance and that when it is swallowed it is very likely to have an injurious effect upon the esophageal and gastric mucosa. At the time they also forget that the quantity of lead which is in a mouthful of gasoline is so minute that it has not been found injurious either to man or beast. A rough calculation based on a quantity of gasoline not in excess of 100 c.c. will show that not more than 100 milligrams of lead could be swallowed even at the highest commercial concentration of tetraethyl lead in gasoline. In the case of tetraethyl the absorption through the intestine is very poor and this would represent an insignificant dose in so far as acute illness might be concerned. I need not point out these facts to you but it always seems curious to me that medical men do not exercise somewhat greater caution instead of arriving at the first conclusion which seems to suggest itself. However in these matters it rarely does any good to enter into an argument so that I have chosen in these cases to arrive at my own conclusions as carefully as possible without paying too much attention to the opinions of attending physicians.

Very truly yours,

RAK:EJ

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