

TANK CLEANING ACCIDENT
CAPE FEAR TERMINAL
WILMINGTON, NORTH CAROLINA

The following is a summary of the factual information obtained to date in connection with the death of [REDACTED] (colored), an employee of Tank Cleaners Incorporated of Jacksonville, Florida, as the result of lead exposure, so diagnosed after the cleaning of tanks at the Cape Fear Terminals in Wilmington, North Carolina.

This information is determined from reports received in the Safety Department up till noon, July 6, but does not include any written report from Dr. Kehoe or Dr. Kitzmiller. During the course of the investigation Dr. Kitzmiller made a trip to Jacksonville, Florida and made certain examinations. We can expect a written report from the Medical Department when certain clinical examinations have been completed.

6/16/48

At Cape Fear Terminal, Wilmington, North Carolina Tank #211, a 40,000 barrel tank, was cleaned by Tank Cleaners Incorporated of Jacksonville, Florida; [REDACTED] and [REDACTED], both colored, in the tank a total of eight hours; tank cleaning under the supervision of L. H. Nichols (white), foreman employed by Tank Cleaners Incorporated. Tank cleaning observed by Fritz Mercer, Ethyl representative, Eastern Region. Cleaned in accordance with Ethyl precautions.

6/18/48
A.M.

Tank cleaning completed; visual inspection by Mercer who pronounced tank clean from the standpoint of a lead hazard, and satisfactory for entry without protective equipment. Tank was a floating roof type and required work on the roof. Work subsequently performed by Chicago Bridge and Iron Works. There were no further entries into this tank

either by the men who cleaned this tank or by the men who did the repair work.

6/18/48
P.M.

Tank cleaning crew moved its equipment to the Carolina Terminals, approximately one-eighth of a mile away and made preparations for the cleaning of a group of 12,000 barrel tanks. Under the observation of Mercer, water was withdrawn from Tank #1 of this group in the late afternoon. There were no tank entries. Mr. L. Williams, a partner in Tank Cleaners Incorporated, was on hand. He and Mercer discussed the precautions to be taken during the cleaning of tanks at Carolina Terminals. Since the tanks had been out of service for five years, and the history was unknown, it was assumed that they may have been in leased service and therefore Mercer recommended that full tank cleaning precautions be followed. Williams agreed.

6/19/48)
6/21/48)

Tanks 1, 2 and A were cleaned by [REDACTED] and Davis under the direction of Nichols. These cleanings were not observed by an Ethyl representative.

6/22/48

[REDACTED] complained of illness, was sent to a local doctor (also colored - name not known) who diagnosed the illness as acute appendicitis and recommended an immediate operation. [REDACTED] refused to be operated upon in Wilmington and was sent to Jacksonville (his home) by bus. Mercer arrived on the job late that afternoon, was informed by Nichols of the illness of [REDACTED] and agreed to meet Nichols at the job the following morning.

6/23/48

Nichols left the job early in the morning, without seeing Mercer, presumably to return to Jacksonville. George Smith, who had arrived by air from Jacksonville the night before, replaced Nichols. Tank #3

was cleaned during the day with entries made by George Smith and [REDACTED], observed by Mercer. On the night of June 23 Bob Jordan was informed by Mr. L. Williams that [REDACTED] was in the hospital with an alleged case of lead poisoning. Jordan reported this information to Lou Shank who in turn reported it to Mat Taylor at approximately 10 o'clock in the evening. Jim Baldwin left that night by air for Wilmington, North Carolina.

6/24/48
A.M.

Dr. Kehoe was informed by Mat Taylor of all pertinent information. A doctor was not dispatched at once, but Dr. Kitzmiller was alerted. Rouser was sent to Jacksonville after reporting sick.

6/25/48

Baldwin and Mercer made a general inspection of Carolina Terminals. They noted that the area within fire banks where the tank washing had been pumped had a strong odor. They also noted a bad break in one length of a hose-line (part of the airline mask equipment) about five feet from the mask. The break appeared to be recent. Mercer had inspected the same hose during the cleaning of Tank #211 and had reported it in good condition at that time. Samples of sludge and scale were taken from Tank #3 (cleaned on 6/23/48) and Tank #1 (cleaned on 6/19/48 and 6/21/48).

6/26/48

Lead-in-air analyzer tests were made on Tank #1. There was no reading higher than 4 micrograms per cubic foot of air obtained either in the tank or above the sludge taken from the tanks, numbered 1, 2, and 4; (atmospheres at, or below, 4 micrograms per cubic foot of air are considered safe for men without protective equipment.) Baldwin reports that Kitzmiller told Baldwin and Mercer by phone that he

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had examined [REDACTED] and in his opinion the man was hysterical — did not have lead poisoning. Dr. Kitzmiller had also examined [REDACTED] and nothing was wrong with him. Later it was reported that [REDACTED] died at approximately 3:30 A.M.

7/2/48

In a phone conversation, Dr. Kehoe reported the following:

There appears to be some disagreement as to whether an airline mask should have been worn during the cleaning of Tanks #1, 2 and A. Nichols stated to Kitzmiller that Mercer had had said that they were not necessary; however, Mercer had told L. Williams (Nichols' boss) that it was necessary to wear this equipment. See discussion under date of June 18 - P.M. Dr. Kehoe gives, as his opinion, that [REDACTED] died as the result of lead exposure. Full proof must await the results of clinical examination. He also stated that [REDACTED] behavior was typical of mild exposure. It was likely that the exposure occurred on Monday, June 21.

It was evident from Dr. Kitzmiller's talk with Nichols that airline masks were not worn during the tank entries on June 19 and 21. Later in the day it was reported that [REDACTED] is said to have slept in one or more of a group of tanks that were cleaned beginning June 11 and ending June 17. These tanks were owned by the Belcher Oil Company, located on Fishers Island off the shore of Miami, Florida. Five tanks were cleaned, four of which were the 10,000 barrel size and the fifth was a 25,000 barrel size. It was reported that the foreman, J. P. Sove (white) returned to the mainland each night, but that the tank cleaners, [REDACTED] and Williams (both colored) slept on the island. [REDACTED] is said to have slept in the tank (or tanks) to escape mosquitoes. Since these tanks were being cleaned and immediately returned to loaded gasoline service, no attempt was made to clean them so as to make them safe for entry without protective equipment.

7/3/48

Shank reported to Taylor that [REDACTED] in the hospital in a straight jacket.

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NOTE:

New York Safety will keep in touch with Dr. Kehoe with reference to the new development in connection with Rosenberg. Also, a complete report will be prepared when all data is complete.

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