

ETHYL GASOLINE CORPORATION

ATLANTA OFFICE

RHODES-HAVERTY BUILDING

ATLANTA, GEORGIA

April 6, 1940.

INTER-OFFICE
CORRESPONDENCE

CONFIDENTIAL

DR. ROBT. A. KEHOE,

Dear Dr. Kehoe,

You will remember when I saw you in New Orleans that I mentioned the fact that from a chance remark dropped by the men in the Arkansas Fuel Oil Corporation office at Shreveport, Mac McCoolley learned that they had some knowledge of an accident which had occurred during a tank cleaning several years ago which had never been officially brought to light. Since that time, Mr. McCoolley has followed up several leads and finally got sufficient information about this case to render a report. This report is attached and I am sending it along to you principally because it may be pertinent since we are reasonably certain that the tank in which this accident occurred, had never been spiked. We also know that it never was a blending tank.

While this accident occurred in 1937, it still came within the time in which our safety program was functioning. While the following is not intended to represent in any sense an alibi for the functioning of our safety program, I think it is pertinent to the case.

During 1937 when this accident occurred, the existence of the Hempstead Petroleum Warehouse Company was not known either to McCoolley or to this office. It so happens that it is a very small terminal which stores turpentine and molasses principally and has two gasoline storage tanks which were leased by the Arkansas Fuel Oil Corporation. This terminal is located in a rather out of the way place and owing to the fact that at that time the Shreveport office of the Arkansas Fuel Oil Company was not in our Division, this terminal was missed in the original survey made at the time that the safety program was inaugurated. In January 1938 when Louisiana was put in this Division, Mr. McCoolley obtained complete information about the Arkansas Fuel Oil Company's storage facilities through their home office at Shreveport, and arrangements were then made for the Arkansas Fuel Oil Company to supervise the cleaning of these leased tanks, both at Mobile and Panama City, owned by the Hempstead Brothers, and for Arkansas to advise us on every occasions when these tanks were cleaned. In November of last year, they cleaned a tank at Panama City and we were duly advised, and Don Phipps was present when the tank was to be cleaned. On that occasion, there was some question about the cleaning of the

tank since they wanted to scrape the side walls and we held them up for a day until McCooley could get there because of Phipps' inexperience with this type of work. Later the tank was cleaned and McCooley supervised the work, without any difficulty.

I mention this because while we missed the tank cleaning in 1937, once McCooley found out the existence of the terminal, the subsequent tank cleaning which took place was in accordance with our standard procedure. We have every reason to believe that future tank cleanings will be properly handled.

You will note that the name of the person involved was not given since the Arkansas Fuel Oil Company did not have this information and the Hempstead Company, who employed the man, were not willing to provide any information whatever. In view of the time which has elapsed since this took place, I doubt if there is much to be gained by any further investigation of the matter. However, if you think otherwise, we will be glad to make an effort to obtain any additional information which you might wish.

Very truly yours,


J. A. Costello.

JAC/F.L

enclosure

CC-Mr. Lewis with enclosure
McCooley.

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Mr. J. A. Costello,

Dear Joe:

This is a report on a tank cleaning accident at The Arkansas Fuel Oil terminal in Mobile, Alabama. You were informed of this accident sometime ago but it was not until this week, while I was in Shreveport, that I was able to get enough information in order to make a report. I first heard of this accident from Mr. Mobley, in charge of terminals for Arkansas Fuel Oil, but he did not know any of the details, and on my visit to their terminal in Mobile I was unable to obtain any information due to the fact that Mr. Parks, superintendent, was out of town. I also determined while in Mobile that it was useless to wait for Mr. Parks as he would not impart any information. It was only this week that I was able to get the history of this case from Mr. Vaughan, who is now assistant to Mr. Mobley, who was at that terminal in Mobile when this tank cleaning accident occurred.

The tank cleaning accident occurred sometime in October 1937, when tank #3, a 10,000 barrel storage tank that had been used in "Q" service from the time they handled leaded products until 1937, when it was cleaned, to be put in kerosene service, which service it is still employed.

The tank in question had been emptied and aired for a period of one month prior to the cleaning. Three colored men, who were temporary employees picked up for this job, entered the tank to clean it. First the tank was washed out well with a fire hose washing down the sides, roof and bottom thoroughly. The three men entered the tank with their ordinary street clothes, barefoot and without masks or other specified equipment. One of the men, his name not known by The Arkansas Fuel Oil Company, spent about one and a half hours in this tank in his barefeet, bucketing out the water, before lunch. The other two men came out of the tank for lunch but this one man ate his lunch inside of the tank, and then took a nap waiting for the other men to return from their lunch period. After lunch the three men completed the job of tank cleaning in about another hour, making a total of three and a half hours which the one man remained inside of the tank.

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It seems that the three men left work together, that evening, and started home together, none of the men noticing any ill effects. All three men returned to work the following day, and it was not until the afternoon that one of the men showed signs of illness. It might be mentioned here that although the man in question did not show any ill effects to The Arkansas Fuel Oil people until the following afternoon, it was found later that the morning following the tank cleaning he went to a doctor in Mobile, who was treating him for a venereal disease. The afternoon following the tank cleaning the man was working in the warehouse and was sent outside for a piece of pipe about 5 feet long, he returned with a piece of pipe about 5 inches long, and from that time on until quitting time they could not get any sense out of him. Upon returning home that evening the man tried to jump out of the trolley car window, and the conductor had him arrested. He remained in jail for four or five hours until they decided that the man was sick rather than drunk as he was charged. When he arrived at his home that night he tried to jump out of the window of his bedroom, and some friends tied him in bed, not knowing what was wrong with him and the next morning he was found dead.

This tank was leased by the Arkansas Fuel Oil Company from The Hempstead Petroleum Warehouse Company, which is now known as ~~XXXXXX~~ H.M. & L.M. Hempstead. As you know Arkansas leases tanks from Hempstead at Panama City and Mobile. At the time of this tank cleaning accident the Hempstead Company cleaned the tank and Arkansas Fuel Oil Company had nothing to do with it. Since Louisiana was put into the Atlanta Division I have arranged with Mr. Mobley to have one of The Arkansas Fuel Oil construction men supervise tank cleanings, according to our regulations, with Hempstead paying the bill.

At the time of this accident our office did not receive notification of this tank cleaning, and this accident was hushed up by both Arkansas and Hempstead, and it was only after several contacts that it was brought to light. There was no settlement made in this case either by Arkansas or Hempstead.

Very truly yours

Martin I. McCooley
Martin I. McCooley

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