

DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL HEALTH AND WELFARE

INTRADEPARTMENTAL CORRESPONDENCE

TO: H.A. Ansley, M.D., D.P.H.,
Director of Health Service,
6th Floor,
Jackson Building.

OUR FILE NO.

REF. YOUR FILE NO.
DATED

FROM:

DATE: 16-9-49

SUBJECT:

Arsenic Trioxide and Sulphur Dioxide in Roaster Smoke

This Division has been in contact with the problem since May of this year when our engineer at Edmonton submitted a report following a visit to Yellowknife. Mr. Christie, whose report has been forwarded, discussed the problem with me before proceeding to Yellowknife. We had been in contact with Mr. R. G. Gibson from time to time and understand that the mining companies are willing to install the necessary equipment for precautionary measures as soon as they can reach a decision on the most satisfactory method.

There is no doubt a definite hazard involved, both to humans and animals, as long as the roaster fumes are allowed to escape freely. Data on file regarding the analyses of animal viscera following death by poisoning at Yellowknife last spring and the reported sickness of a man from drinking surface water supports this conclusion.

It must be remembered, in assessing this situation, that present operations in the area are only a beginning and may be greatly increased as mining operations expand.

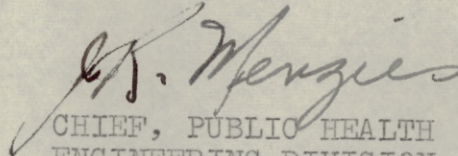
The location of the town and water supply, with respect to the roasters, is such that available methods of controlling the discharge of poisonous material should be fully utilized.

In this connection, the proposal to store liquid wastes in the tailings pile or in a gravel bed seems to me unusually hazardous on the basis of present information. However no definite decision should be made until a careful survey is made by our engineers.

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With regard to the final paragraph in Mr. Gibson's letter, I would endorse the idea of no more agricultural leases until firm decisions are made on the problems involved.

JRM:mrl


CHIEF, PUBLIC HEALTH
ENGINEERING DIVISION.