

What the gage actually does is to transfer the sight setting from a master rifle, correctly sighted by actual firing, to rifles sighted in the laboratory equipment.

Science News Letter, May 15, 1943

PUBLIC HEALTH

Death Rate Is Rising; Pneumonia Worrisome

► THE DEATH RATE is rising and the pneumonia situation is particularly worrisome, it appears from the Statistical Bulletin of the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company.

A 5.5% increase in mortality among the company's industrial policy holders was recorded for the first quarter of this year as compared with last year's figure. For the country as a whole, an even greater rise in mortality has probably occurred. In the 90 major cities of the United States there were 9.2% more deaths reported for the first 13 weeks of 1943 than for the corresponding weeks of 1942. In New York City the death rate so far this year is about 8.5% higher than for the same period last year.

The war cannot be blamed directly for the increase in mortality, it appears. Among the company's industrial policy holders, the rate for deaths from enemy action for the first quarter of 1943 was more than twice that for the first quarter of 1942, but this, it is said, "does not account for the unfavorable turn in mortality for 1943. Most of the rise in rate this year has resulted from other causes."

Pneumonia seems to be the chief factor. The death rate for the first quarter of 1943 is low compared with rates prior to 1941, but is 21% higher than last year's rate for the first quarter. Virus pneumonia, also called "atypical pneumonia of unknown etiology," has made up a large proportion of pneumonia cases during the past season, and this type of pneumonia is not affected by sulfa drug treatment.

Seeking to allay the fear that the rise in the pneumonia death rate presages another world-wide flu-pneumonia epidemic, the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company health authorities point out that virus pneumonia is different from both influenza and the pneumonia which accompanied influenza in 1918.

"Nevertheless, the situation needs careful watching," they state.

"The war effort would be seriously hampered by an increase in pneumonia mortality or even by a continuation of the recent level."

Meningitis mortality also increased sharply in 1943. Disquieting also is the increase in deaths from cancer, diabetes, cerebral hemorrhage, diseases of the coronary arteries and angina pectoris and the chronic heart diseases. With the exception of diabetes, the 1943 death rates for all of these are the highest on record.

MEDICINE

Unsafe Jobs for Youths

When boys and girls of 16 or 17 years go to work in a war factory, they should not be placed where lead is concentrated in atmosphere.

► WHEN boys and girls 16 or 17 years old go to work in a war factory, there are certain jobs that are safe for them and others which are too dangerous. Grown-ups, for example, can, unless they are unusually susceptible, work in an atmosphere in which there are 1.5 milligrams of lead in every 10 cubic meters of air. Such an atmosphere is not safe for boys and girls, in the opinion of the U. S. Children's Bureau.

Young workers at the age of 16 or 17 are considered in general more susceptible to lead poisoning than older workers. They are less likely to appreciate that special safeguards and personal cleanliness are necessary to protect themselves from the danger of lead and its compounds.

No workers under 18 years of age, the Children's Bureau advises, should be employed at the following types of work:

1. Work in connection with the production of white lead or other salts or oxides of lead.
2. Work in workrooms in which lead salts or oxides are used in such a state that they give rise to lead dust in the air.
3. Work in occupations in which metallic lead is regularly used in the molten state.
4. Work in connection with tetraethyl lead.

Types of work suitable for young workers, provided the work is done in rooms segregated from those in which lead compounds are used in the dry state

Fatal accidents in the home have increased, in spite of the fact that there is very little unemployment and less time is spent in the home now than before the war.

Only cheerful spots on the current health picture are the marked decline in maternal mortality, especially noteworthy in view of the increased birth-rate, and the continued decline in the tuberculosis death rate which was 6.8% less in the first quarter of 1943 than in the same period last year.

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and are essentially free from lead in the atmosphere, are:

1. Can filling and labeling in paint factories.
2. Marking and testing of storage battery cases.
3. Shipping-department work.
4. Machine-shop, woodworking, and other shopwork not covered by existing regulations.
5. Laboratory work.
6. Office work.

Further details about safe and unsafe work for young workers appear in a series of advisory standards being issued by the Children's Bureau, U. S. Department of Labor.

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MEDICINE

New Sulfa Drug Is Two To Four Times as Potent

► A NEW sulfa drug has been developed which promises to be a more potent weapon against intestinal infections, such as dysentery, than its predecessors in the sulfa family. Phthalylsul-fathiazole is its name. It is announced in a report by Dr. Edgar J. Poth and Dr. Charles A. Ross, of the University of Texas Medical School, to the Society for Pharmacology and Experimental Therapeutics.

It has two to four times the germ-checking power of succinylsul-fathiazole. Doses by mouth at four-hour intervals have not caused any toxic symptoms in dog or man.

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