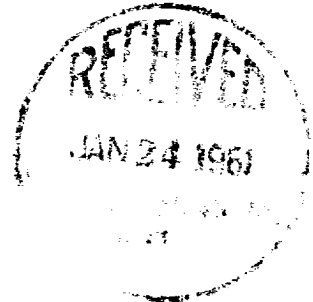


P. O. Box 3312  
Durango, Colorado  
January 23, 1961



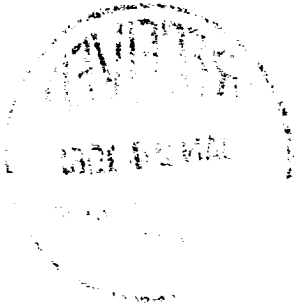
United States Geological Survey  
Box 959  
Farmington, New Mexico

Gentlemen:

On January 7, 1961, there was a serious fire at Continental Oil Company's Well 27 No. 2, located in the NW NW of Section 27-25N-4W, Rio Arriba County, New Mexico. Lehmann Well Servicing Company had just completed running rods in the well and hung the well on to the pumping unit at the time of the fire. Upon completion of the pulling unit work, the crew started rigging down and the company representative left the well to go to another part of the lease. During the course of the work, they circulated oil to kill the well and keep it from flowing. The oil was circulated to a 150-barrel mud tank and a pump that was located approximately 100' northwest of the pulling unit and the well head. At 10:45 A. M., they were attempting to start the pump in order to transfer the 75 barrels of oil from their mud tank to a 400-barrel storage tank, belonging to Continental, that was setting at the northwest corner of the location.

The crew took up the lines from the well head to the 150-barrel mud tank and the pump, and had laid a new line from the pump to the 400-barrel tank. During the process of taking up the lines, they spilled oil along the ground from the well head to the pump.

They were unable to start the mud pump with the battery on the mud pump and obtained another battery. Mr. Frank Brack, who was one of the helpers on the crew had considerable amount of oil on his clothes since he had been working derrick when the well was pulled. He installed a jumper from the new battery to the old battery and started the pump engine. When the pump engine started, he dropped the jumper, which arced and set his clothes on fire. At the



RECEIVED  
FBI  
JAN 10 1964

TO: DIRECTOR, FBI  
FROM: SAC, NEW YORK  
SUBJECT: [Illegible]

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time of the initial flash, he stepped back into a pool of oil that was spilled when they were changing the lines around the pump and set this oil on fire. The flames spread from the pool of oil to the mud tank and pump which caught on fire. Flames then spread from the mud tank along the oil spilled where the lines were taken up between the well head and pump. These flames ignited a 200-gallon diesel tank, which exploded. The exploding diesel tank set fire to the pulling unit and the well head.

Due to the fact that Mr. Brack was seriously burned, the crew was very busy in giving first aid to Mr. Brack and attending to his needs. It was during this period that the fire spread. A plane was called from Farmington and Mr. Brack was transported by plane to the San Juan County Hospital. He arrived at the hospital at 1:00 P. M., approximately two hours after the injury. After the fire spread to the well head, it was necessary to obtain pump trucks from Halliburton and Dowell and approximately 300 barrels of water were put on the fire before the fire could be brought under control. Due to the inaccessibility of the area, it was 4:00 P. M. before the pump and water trucks arrived. The fire was brought under control at 5:00 P. M.

The pulling unit was completely destroyed and the loss was estimated at \$120,000. Since both strings of tubing in the well parted, due to the fire heat, the damage to Continental's equipment at the well head and in the well is estimated to be \$25,000. Mr. Brack's condition is still very serious, but as of this date, he is expected to live.

As of this date, both strings of tubing have been replaced in the well, the casing has been pressure tested and a complete new christmas tree has been installed. The well will be back on production on January 23, 1961.

Continental appointed an investigation board consisting of Mr. F. R. Nelson, Regional Drilling Superintendent of Denver, Mr. Dave Tedesko, Regional Safety Engineer of Denver and Mr. M. D. Haley, District Superintendent of Durango, to investigate this fire. The Board found that the equipment was located the prescribed distance from the well head for safe operation. They further found that the cause of the fire was the use of the jumper battery cable to start the pump engine.

[illegible][illegible]

1. The first part of the document is a letter from the President of the United States to the President of the Senate, dated January 1, 1901. The letter is signed by William McKinley and is addressed to John D. Long. The letter is a copy of a letter that was sent to the President of the Senate by the President of the United States.

[illegible][illegible]

U. S. G. S.

Page 3

The other contributing factor to the fire was the failure of the crew to cover up the oil spilled when they took up the lines. This allowed the fire to spread and cause a considerable amount of damage.

The Board felt that the crew did the right thing in administering aid to Mr. Brack before they attempted to put out the fire. It was their opinion that the method used to extinguish the fire was correct and that the company had taken all the proper precautions during the fighting of the fire.

It is with the greatest of regret that I must report this fire, and the personal injury to Mr. Brack and the damage to the equipment at the well. This is to advise that we will take every step possible to prevent any further fires such as this one on our leases.

If there is any further information you desire regarding this fire, please advise.



H. D. Haley  
District Superintendent  
Durango District  
Production Department

HDH-pk

cc R. E. White (1)  
Denver, Colo.

N. M. O. C. C. (2) ✓  
Astec, New Mex.

Note to N. M. O. C. C.: Approximately 100 barrels of oil were destroyed in the fire.

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