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DEVELOPMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH POLICY: POPE A. LAWRENCE PAPERS 1924-1983



The collection documents the varied research and policymaking career of Pope A. Lawrence, an environmental health specialist with the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare and the Public Health Service. His papers contain a wealth of primary source research materials and scientific data related to: environmental and industrial hygiene; radon activity; use of beryllium as a rocket propellant; uranium mining; and toxicological, biological and chemical weapon systems.

Date Range: 1924-1983

Content: 33,447 images

Source Library: History of Medicine Division, National Library of Medicine

Detailed Description:

Pope A. Lawrence was born in 1912 in Yorktown, Texas. He graduated from the University of Texas with a Bachelor of Science in Chemical Engineering. He then attended the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, completing a Master of Science in Chemical Engineering and Colloid Chemistry. Lawrence's interest in engineering led him to Harvard University, where he fulfilled the requirements for a Master of Science in Industrial Hygiene Engineering. His academic training in chemistry, biology, physical science and industrial hygiene prepared him for a number of duties with the U.S. Public Health Service as a commissioned officer. It was during this time, that he was assigned to Texas, New Mexico and Utah state health departments from 1942-1952, investigating issues on industrial and environmental health. During 1952-1961, he supervised a fifteen-year study on the health of American uranium miners for the National Cancer Institute. He also served as a specialist consultant in the areas of chemical warfare, industrial emissions of toxic chemicals (i.e., lead, gases, mercury arsenic, beryllium) while serving in the Office of the Surgeon General (1962-1964). While with the Office of the Surgeon General, he entered the EPA's Air Pollution Control Program to provide expertise on the control of hazardous materials associated with federal activities in high energy propellants and toxic weapons systems. As a scientist, he approached his projects with a methodical and research oriented background in highlight the health and safety hazards on the American worker. The federal government

was concerned about these issues raised by the public and by the workers, encouraging Lawrence to become instrumental in helping to research and develop alternative ways to control these matters. As a result, he and his team of experts helped to write policies that would later impact on legislative decisions in state and federal areas to improve the safety and health issues of the American laborer.

Correspondence, field studies, reports, scientific data, photographs, maps, and publications document the varied research and policy-making career of Pope A. Lawrence, an environmental health scientist with the Public Health Service (PHS) and the Environmental Health Agency (EPA). His papers contain a wealth of primary source research materials and scientific data related to: environmental and industrial hygiene; radon activity; use of beryllium as a rocket propellant; uranium mining; and toxicological, biological and chemical weapon systems, primarily from the 1950s through the 1970s, especially as related to America's atomic age federal policy. Included in this collection are personal letters to and from his children discussing their academic aspirations; the exhibit of parental advice on their decisions, as well as handwritten letters to and from colleagues sharing career plans and employment promotions. The collection is evidence of the high-importance federal government scientists/researchers placed on ensuring effective implementation of pertinent provisions of the Clean Air Act (1963) and their work for the abatement or control of environmental and workplace pollution.

This collection comprises eight series:

Series I: Personal and Biographical, 1930-1977

Series II: Correspondence, 1936-1976

Series III: Air Pollution Control Office, 1924-1979

Series IV: Environmental Health Reports and Research Articles, 1939-1978

Series V: Publications, 1936-1981

Series VI: Lawrence Speeches and Writings, 1941-1968

Series VII: Conferences and Meetings, 1952-1977

Oversize Materials

The Correspondence and Air Pollution Control Office series comprise the bulk of the collection's research potential. The Correspondence series reveals Lawrence's abilities as an administrator and his communication skills in relating with sister agencies in the PHS and other similar state agencies (state health Departments in Texas, New Mexico and Utah); the National Cancer Institute (NIH Field Investigations and Demonstrations Branch); and as Chief of the EPA's Federal Agencies Section, Abatement Branch, Division of Air Pollution. This series also illuminates federal activities and programs involving the Department of Defense, National Aeronautics and Space Administration, and the Armed Services Explosives Safety Board. Lawrence's correspondence files also record his service as liaison representative to

the Committee on Toxicology, reviewing plans to demilitarize and develop safe methods of disposing chemical and biological weapon systems waste.

Series III also documents the most significant portion of Lawrence's professional career as an administrator and policy chief for a 10 year fifteen state research project involving respiratory cancer. Its goal was to identify specific types of cancer deaths due to oral and pulmonary cancer and recommend strategies for reducing the spread of these cancers through workplace and environmental improvements. The field studies were made using veterans who smoked, uranium mining and mill workers, railroad workers, firemen and diesel workers, occupational and industrial workers. Uranium mining was the primary focus of this research. The "Uranium Miner's Study" subseries contains much of the original field research and administrative work, whereas the later "Uranium Mining" subseries documents the ongoing post-study analysis and broader reporting and research activities with which Lawrence was involved.

Complementing the series are twenty-four geographical survey maps of the United States that detail the field study areas used in the ten-year study on respiratory cancer. The maps reflect the work of several federal agencies involved in developing environmental standards and implementing guidelines for the contamination cleanup and restoration of land areas, national park areas, industrial areas, and polluted air. The maps of uranium deposit locations correspond with the field studies presented by Lawrence and other scientists involved in that research.

This collection also documents his participation at conferences and making scientific presentations highlighting many preventive measures on environmental, industrial and occupational fronts that had potential damaging affect on the lives and health conditions of American workers. His work became central in the federal government establishing legislative policy in its accountability to the American public.

From the "Finding Aid to the Pope A. Lawrence Papers, 1924-1983," History of Medicine Division, National Library of Medicine

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c=nlmfindaid;cc=nlmfindaid;view=text;rgn=main;didno=lawrence539](http://oculus.nlm.nih.gov/cgi/f/findaid/findaid-idx?c=nlmfindaid;cc=nlmfindaid;view=text;rgn=main;didno=lawrence539)

Source Note: This collection comprises MS C 539: Pope A. Lawrence Papers, Modern Manuscripts Collection, History of Medicine Division, National Library of Medicine, Bethesda, MD. All files have been included, with the exception of the photographic slides. The twenty-four oversize geographical survey maps of the United States have been included in this publication, but were segmented during scanning.