

# Petrochemical Industry Shows 125 Per Cent Gain in Few Years

By **ELMER C. WALZER**  
UPI Financial Editor

New York—(UPI)—The petrochemical industry which has grown from \$2,110,000,000 to \$4,750,000,000 from 1950 to 1957 is heading for another spurt in the years ahead, according to experts.

Records cited by Harris, Upham and company, stock exchange members, in a study on the petrochemical industry, show that petrochemicals gained 125 per cent in the period noted above while other chemicals rose 57 per cent.

The study looks for a growth of about 18 per cent annually for the industry which means it would double in about five and a half years to a size of nearly \$10 billion.

The engineering firm of Ford, Bacon & Davis, has just estimated that the synthetic ammonia industry (branch of the petrochemical industry) must expand its production by about 80 per cent to meet farm and industrial demands by 1975. This would involve a capital investment of \$450 million.

**Fertilizer**  
Synthetic ammonia is a chief source of chemical nitrogen fertilizer. It is made from natural gas and air. The natural gas yields the hydrogen and the air the nitrogen.

Natural gas is a hydrocarbon—contains hydrogen and carbon. The air we breathe contains oxygen, nitrogen and carbon dioxide. The job of producing ammonia is to get rid of the carbon and oxygen and leave a product that contains one part of nitrogen and three of hydrogen. The oxygen is combined with carbon and passed off in the form of carbon monoxide and carbon dioxide. The resulting ammonia has a whiff that would give you a real jolt if you stood over it and inhaled the fumes.

R. P. Westerhoff, vice president of Ford, Bacon and Davis, notes that total existing ammonia capacity now is about 10 billion pounds a year with a value of \$500 million. The expansion he suggests would make it a billion dollar industry alone.

**Explosives**  
Demand for a nitrogen fertilizer and for ammonium nitrate for explosives in controlled blasting is growing steadily. Farmers are fertilizing their land more heavily to make it more fertile. They will need more as time goes on and we get into the 200 million mark in our population by 1975, Westerhoff explains.

The Harris, Upham study lists many products of the petrochemical industry under such general headings as plastics, synthetic rubber, detergents, plasticizers, dyes and pigments, medicinal, flavor and perfume material, insecticides, and many miscellaneous uses. The most important in

the miscellaneous are alcohols which are used as solvents and anti-freeze.

The big chemical companies and the big oil companies are the chief producers of petrochemicals.

**Biggest Growth**  
Harris-Upham looks for the biggest growth in the field to come into the plastic segment. Plastics, the firm notes, have displaced steel in many applications and have made inroads into markets previously held by non-ferrous metals.

Here are a few things that

can come from petrochemicals: Your clothing, the vitamins you take, the antibiotics that prolong your life, your tires, the paints and varnishes in your home, perfume for the ladies, and the dyes in your clothing and household articles.

Someday autos may be made of plastic, walls may be covered with it so they never have to be painted, and some day there may be a paint-free home with color-impregnated plastics used for both inside and outside surfaces.

# New Tests Show One Drink Too Many for Driving

By **DELOS SMITH**  
UPI Science Editor

New York—(UPI)—A new and probably more meaningful test of the effect of alcohol on a driver's ability to drive safely has turned up proof that even one drink is one too many.

The investigating scientists were so impressed they said there ought to be laws forbidding driving after even the smallest drink, until enough time had passed for the effect to wear off.

Previous tests measured the degree to which drink affected the reactions and the skills of drivers. On the basis of those tests, the National Safety Council considers that a blood alcohol level from zero to 0.05 per cent does not in itself make a driver less safe.

The new test measured what alcohol does to the minds of drivers—to their judgment and their willingness to take chances. On the basis of this test, any level above zero, no matter how slight, can lessen a driver's judgment while increasing his sense of daring.

**Old Is Meaningless**  
The old way of testing is meaningless for drivers who have had only a few drinks, said Dr. John Cohen and his associates, E. J. Darnaley and C. E. M. Hansel. Perhaps their reaction times and driving skills are unchanged, but if so, so what? The "decisive" question is what alcohol has done to their thinking.

The scientists tested veteran bus drivers with conspicuous records for safe driving. All were sober family men; their average age was 45. If alcohol upset their judgment, then the "consequences" of drink would be much more serious "in younger, less experienced, or less skillful drivers," it was reasoned.

Two white-painted posts were set up on a testing ground. One post was movable and thus the distance between posts could be varied. Each man sat behind the wheel of a stationary bus eight feet wide pointed at a seven-foot gap between posts from a distance of 12 feet.

The gap was widened two inches at a time until the driver selected the width of the gap which he thought he could drive the bus through without touching either post.

**Drivers Select Gap**  
That was the test of judgment. It was followed by a test of daring-do. Each driver was required to select the narrowest gap through which he was willing to try to drive his bus five times without touching either post any time. He was then asked to do, to see if he could.

The drivers were divided into three groups. Those in one group drank 1.76 ounces of scotch with soda, group two downed some fast ones totalling 5.5 ounces of scotch. Group three got nothing.

The results were statistically calculated to get scientific accuracy despite "variables," such as the fact that the same amount of alcohol will have less effect on one person than another. These "statistically significant" results were: The sober drivers correctly estimated the width between two posts through which an eight-foot bus could pass, and when they undertook to drive a bus repeatedly through the narrowest possible gap, they succeeded. The one-drink drivers were less successful, and the multiple-drink ones did even worse.

Dr. Cohen is professor of psychology, University of Manchester, England. He has a world reputation for studies of the psychology of drivers and gamblers.

## Santa Barbara Notes Earthquake Activity

Santa Barbara, Calif.—(UPI)—Residents of this quake-conscious area hoped today the region's latest earth shaking activity was over.

From "four to six" minor tremors were reported Sunday night, after an initial shock of approximately six seconds around 9:26 p.m. (pst). No damage or injuries were reported.

Residents as far as 10 miles from here reported the earthquake activity.



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# Vancouver Plants Damaged by Flames

Vancouver, Wash.—(UPI)—A general alarm fire early today burned through almost a square block of plants and businesses in the west side industrial area here.

Fire Chief Vance Galbraith said loss "could amount to a half million dollars."

The blaze was discovered about 1:20 a.m. in a building of a plastic processing firm. It spread rapidly to other buildings in the block, including an ice and cold storage plant structure which housed a frozen food locker plant, a cafe and a barber shop. It also burned a large storage and distribution plant of the Washington Farmers Co-op.

Flames for a time threatened a row of houses nearby. Roofs of four homes two blocks away were set ablaze by sparks as was a paper mill roof about three blocks away.

# Portland Woman Admits Stabbing

Portland—(UPI)—Phyllis (Torchy) Jessing, 28, has admitted the stabbing last Friday night of Alfred E. Kiefer, her boy friend who was arrested recently on extortion charges, police said today.

Miss Jessing, a harmaid, was held under \$10,000 bail on a charge of assault while armed with a dangerous weapon. Kiefer was reported covering in a local hospital.

Police quoted Miss Jessing as saying she loved Kiefer and did not know why she stabbed him.

Police also arrested William Font Jr., 29, a material witness in the stabbing case and were seeking James Q. Jenkins as a material witness. Kiefer and Jenkins were arrested June 4 and accused of attempting to extort money from nursing homes.

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