

GOVERNMENT TO DOUBLE ALCOHOL POISON CONTENT AND ALSO ADD BENZINE

SMELL WARNS DRINKERS

Chemists Say Formula Is
No More Dangerous
Than One Now Used.

"SUICIDE," SAYS WHEELER

Edwards and Hinckley Assail
His "Callous" Attitude Toward
Liquor Deaths.

1926 CITY TOLL MAY BE 800

30 Holiday Victims—Poland
Offers Legal Aid to Their Kin—
Phelps Hits Federal Policy.

Special to The New York Times.

WASHINGTON, Dec. 29. — The percentage of wood alcohol used in denaturing industrial alcohol for twenty years, including the period of prohibition, will be doubled when the revised "completely denatured alcohol Formula No. 5" goes into effect on Jan. 1.

This revision was actually approved by Secretary Mellon on Oct. 8. But the fact that the wood alcohol content required was twice that which had been used attracted little attention outside the industrial alcohol trade. The issuance of the new regulations nearly three months before the effective date was to enable manufacturers to prepare their stocks to comply with the new regulations.

No. 5 is one of two general formulas for industrial alcohol that will be effective after Jan. 1. Three have been dropped. In addition to these two, there will be continued what are known as "special formulas" for specific preparations.

The new requirement is optional until April 1. The manufacturer of industrial alcohol may continue until then with the old formula No. 5, if the percentage of wood alcohol is doubled, or he may adopt at once the more completely changed formula. At any rate, the wood alcohol must be doubled on Jan. 1. After April 1 the formula will contain in addition a compound known as "alcohol grade A," or oxidized kerosene, the taste and odor of which are said to be more offensive than those from the pyridine bases used in the old formula No. 5.

Brings Odor to the Nostrils.

"It gives a greater warning to the drinker that he is getting hold of something that he should leave alone," said a Government chemist today.

The doubling up of wood alcohol and alcohol, it was explained, brings the odor vapors to the nostrils more quickly. The methanol, or wood alcohol, sends off its vapors first, bringing with them the vaporized alcohol. By doubling the alcoholic denaturant the gases are found to come off in more effective fashion. The formula will be in the preparation of 100 parts by volume of ethyl alcohol to four parts of methanol, 0.75 part of alcohol and 0.5 part of benzine.

Although the wood alcohol has been doubled officials of the prohibition unit do not regard the percentage as unusual. It was pointed out that in Canada thirty parts of wood alcohol to seventy parts of ethyl was used. It is apparently the belief of the officials that the new formula will be no more dangerous than the one it supplants and will be far more unpalatable. There was a theory expressed that it would be, in fact, "less deadly and less drinkable."

This expression was used by Wayne B. Wheeler, General Counsel of the Anti-Saloon League, who called on President Coolidge today to complain that certain prohibition agents were becoming wet propagandists. He also pledged support to the Government by the dries and argued that the recent elections showed that the States were more than ever willing to stand behind dry enforcement. Mr. Wheeler, however, said he would be glad if the authorities were able to work out a formula with poison absent from it.

Seek a Less Poisonous Compound.

Chemists of the prohibition unit are working on another new formula, and the preparation of denaturants and tests are part of the daily grind in the chemical laboratory. The use of oxidized kerosene, or alcohol, will be experimented with further and improved upon, if possible, with the idea of developing a less poisonous and more unpalatable compound and one that the bootleggers will not be able to remove. There is little chance that castor oil, which has been considered, will become one of the denaturants, as it has been proved that the distasteful ingredient can be extracted from the denatured product.

Mr. Wheeler defended the use of the methanol, declaring that no other nation had been able to discover a more satisfactory denaturant. Referring to the small percentage used by the United States Government, he pointed to the fact that the use of 2 per cent. of wood alcohol had been practiced ever since 1906, at the request, he said, of the alcohol dealers themselves for their protection. He thought the attempts to violate the law under pro-

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ALCOHOL POISONING IS TO BE DOUBLED

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hibition by purchasing this stock and extracting the methanol made more drastic steps necessary.

"A Deliberate Suicide."

"The Government," said Mr. Wheeler, "is under no obligation to furnish the people with alcohol that is drinkable when the Constitution prohibits it. The person who drinks this industrial alcohol is a deliberate suicide. The Government, however, is trying to find a substitute, so that through obnoxious smell and odor this alcoholic liquor will be entirely unfit for beverage use. If it can do this, it will be a good thing. Thus far, however, none of the nations has found such a denaturant. The very fact that men will gamble with their lives to get a drink of liquor shows how deeply this habit was fixed on the people under the old license system. To root out a bad habit like that costs many lives and long years of effort."

Mr. Wheeler said he had called the attention of President Coolidge to the activities of Nathaniel Harben, who recently resigned as an Assistant United States Attorney in New York, declaring that Mr. Harben was the latest of the leaders of the wets to circulate propaganda to the detriment of enforcement.

"If, as he claims," said the Anti-Saloon leader, "there are 22,000 places where liquor is sold in New York City, his department is a dismal failure, and the whole group should resign."

He added that a competent effort by officials soon would change the conditions described by Mr. Harben.

"I called to pledge to the President," said Mr. Wheeler, "redoubled support during 1927 of the friends of the Eighteenth Amendment in every effort made by the Administration to secure better enforcement and the passage of necessary enforcement legislation, including the Reorganization bill and the Civil Service bill and such other Administration measures as have been requested. The election of dry legislators and law-enforcement Governors in practically all of the States where such elections were held last November indicates a wholesome trend in the States to accept their share of responsibility for law enforcement."

"Legalized Murder," Says Edwards.

Senator Edwards, Democrat, of New Jersey declared in a statement today that the poisoning of industrial alcohol was "legalized murder" and sharply attacked the position taken by Mr. Wheeler in defending what was being done.

"Mr. Wheeler," he said, "sought to justify the poisoning of industrial alcohol by the Government by classifying deaths from drinking the poisonous beverage as 'deliberate suicide' and calling bootleggers 'potential murderers.' I call it legalized murder, and the Government is an accessory to the crime. Poisoning of industrial alcohol by the Government cannot be justified on moral, economic or spiritual grounds when an unpalatable, non-poisonous substance will serve the same purpose."

"The Treasury Department should stop the practice at once. It is charged with the enforcement of prohibition and should throw into action every agent to prevent any further deaths through the leakage of poisonous alcohol now on hand into bootleg channels. If the present law requires the poison process, Congress should act immediately to change the law."

"If the Government finds itself impotent to enforce the Volstead act, as has been repeatedly demonstrated, it should act to prevent a repetition of the shocking death toll from poison liquor witnessed during the Christmas holidays."

"So long as the Government continues to put deadly poison into industrial alcohol, which leaks into bootleggers' channels through the corruption of Government officials, it will continue an unholy alliance with the undertaker."

Wheeler's Attitude Shocking.

"It is difficult to understand the complaisant attitude of Mr. Wheeler toward the deaths resulting from poison liquor. It must astound even the most ardent dry. To the law-abiding citizens of the nation, who have no fanatical devotion to Volsteadism, it is shocking."

"Dr. Wheeler says 'Every one knows the danger.' In the administration of Volsteadism the means justifies the end, according to Anti-Saloon League philosophy. It is this philosophy that is bringing the day nearer when Dr. Wheeler and the Anti-Saloon League will be repudiated by every moral and patriotic citizen in the country."

"Like a serpent in the Garden of Eden, the Treasury Department, working hand in hand with the Wheeler cohorts, is holding out forbidden fruit to tempt derelicts and poor unfortunates whose craving for drink can never be cured by coercive and arbitrary measures."

"When Volstead prohibition is denounced, Wheeler always raises the cry of 'the corner saloon' and 'the liquor interests,' but this is no justification for the Government lending a hand in poisoning its citizens."

Hinckley Also Attacks Wheeler.

G. C. Hinckley, National Secretary of the Association Against the Prohibition Amendment, also attacked Mr. Wheeler for his reported references to

people being "deliberate suicides" who drink poisoned liquor.

"The stigmatizing by Wayne Wheeler of the victims of poisoned liquor as 'deliberate suicides' throws the clearest light shed in many a day," said Mr. Hinckley, "on the callous nature that is conjoined with the maudlin sentiment of the Anti-Saloon League and its chief proponents."

"How the obsessions of zealotry can serve to obliterate the ordinary dictates of humanity has never been better portrayed than by this statement from Mr. Wheeler, although others previously issuing from the same source are helpful in that respect."

"For example, when in the past a bootlegger has killed a prohibition enforcement agent in the course of a running fight, the unfortunate officer of the law has been at once enrolled in the noble army of martyrs by Mr. Wheeler. But now, when a citizen innocent of the breaking of any law—for even Mr. Wheeler's pet laws do not make it a crime to purchase liquor—is poisoned by the bootlegger's goods, the victim, by Mr. Wheeler's dictum, is guilty of suicide, a moral crime of such atrocious nature as not more than a century ago would suffice to have its perpetrator buried at four crossroads, with a stake driven through his entrails."

"In opposing the use of poison denaturants, this association has always held that nobody voted for prohibition with murderous intent. It still holds that the misguided followers of the Anti-Saloon League did not so vote. The cool manner with which Mr. Wheeler treats the matter, however, would seem to call for a revision of this view, in so far as some of the more extreme among the fanatical prohibitionists are concerned."

Text of Revised Formula.

The text of the revised formula No. 5 for denaturing industrial alcohol, which calls for an increase in the percentage of methanol or wood alcohol, follows:

Effective Jan. 1, 1927. Completely Denatured Alcohol Formula 5 will be compounded according to either one of the following formulas: After April 1, 1927, it will be compounded only according to the first one of the stated formulas:

OPTION 1.

100 parts by volume ethyl alcohol, not less than 160 degrees proof.

48 parts by volume approved methanol (denaturing grade).

0.75 parts by volume of the compound or one similar thereto known as alcohol grade A.

0.5 parts by volume approved benzene (kerosene).

OPTION 2.

100 parts by volume ethyl alcohol, not less than 160 degrees proof.

4 parts by volume approved methanol (denaturing grade).

2.25 parts by volume approved pyridine bases.

0.25 parts by volume approved pyridine (kerosene).

Specifications for alcohol grade A or compounds similar thereto. A product of the oxidation of kerosene having the following characteristics:

SPECIFIC GRAVITY—Not over 0.825 at 60 degrees F.

DISTILLATION RANGE—When 100 CC. are subjected to distillation in the same manner and apparatus specified for determining the boiling point of methanol, not less than 200 CC. will distill over under 200 degrees C. and not less than 95 CC. will distill over under 290 degrees C.

BEHAVIOR WITH SCHIFF'S REAGENT (ALDEHYDES)—10 CC. of the liquid with 15 CC. of Schiff's reagent must show decided violet color within 30 seconds after addition and agitation.

Solubility in 90 per cent. ethyl alcohol. When 10 cc. of the liquid is placed in a stoppered cylinder, graduated to one-tenth of a cc. an equal quantity of 90 per cent. ethyl alcohol added and the contents shaken and allowed to stand, the alcohol layer will measure not less than 12 cc.

Iodine Number—The iodine number shall be not less than 35.

The sample submitted for approval shall have the characteristic odor and color of the standard sample sent to the authorized chemist.

D. H. BLAIR,

Commissioner of Internal Revenue.

Approved: Oct. 8, 1926.

A. W. MILLON,

Secretary of the Treasury.