

Greening of Consumer Products

an Allen Matkins
market intelligence
publication

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March 28, 2008

California Senate debates move that would extend its ban on Phthalates in toys throughout the US

The Daily Green - Mar 24

In the continuing fight over phthalates in toys, California's Senator Dianne Feinstein has made a move to extend her state's ban across the US. Children's health proponents say phthalates, used to soften plastics, have been linked to cancer, and function as endocrine disruptors. A recent study by Illinois PIRG found that nearly half of 20 common plastic toys tested contained detectable levels of phthalates, several with "high levels." Feinstein included a national ban on phthalates into the Senate version of a Consumer Product Safety Commission bill. It will have to wind its way through a reconciliation committee, and receive passage. That is likely to be a steep challenge, given the likelihood of intense opposition from the well-funded and well-connected chemical industry.

Green Product Focus

Not so squeaky clean: a study of phthalates in toys

The following report follows product recalls, and the testing of 1,200 toys in 2007 by the Washington Toxics Coalition, the Michigan-based Ecology Center and others in late 2007 found that the problem hasn't been solved. The problem, according to the report, is that more than a third of the toys tested positive for lead, and nearly 50% were made of PVC (polyvinyl chloride, also known as vinyl), a plastic associated with the use of toxic additives. The testing also revealed that toys made of PVC were more likely to contain toxic metals such as lead and cadmium. The following report claims that although Washington has been a leader in protecting children's health from toxic chemicals, no restrictions on phthalate use are currently in place for products sold in Washington.

2.4 million more potentially deadly Mega Brands magnetic toys recalled

Chicago Tribune - Mar 18

Federal safety regulators recalled an additional 2.4 million potentially deadly Mega Brands magnetic toys, at least 14 months after learning there might be problems with some of those products. Mega Brands had sent some of the toys recalled to consumers as presumably safe replacements for Magnetix building sets recalled as a deadly hazard in 2006 and 2007.

Reebok fined record \$1 million for leaden bracelets

Environment News Service - Mar 19

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission announced that Reebok, a manufacturer of athletic shoes and apparel, has agreed to pay the federal government a one million dollar civil penalty. This fine is the largest ever imposed for a violation of the Federal Hazardous Substances Act. In agreeing to settle the matter, Reebok denies that it violated federal law.

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2002 - 2007

The penalty settles allegations that Reebok imported and distributed charm bracelets that contained toxic levels of lead. The charm bracelets were provided as free gifts with the purchase of certain styles of Reebok girl's shoes. In March 2006, a four year-old boy from Minneapolis died of lead poisoning after swallowing a bracelet's heart-shaped charm.

Consumer product safety site launches text messaging service for Bisphenol A free baby products

serversatoz.com - Mar 21

The website 'Z Recommends' has recently launched a free [text messaging service](#) that allows consumers query their database of companies that sell products that could contain Bisphenol A. They've also got a printable wallet-card, which serves as a quick reference for the text service, sourcing major companies. To access the service, customers are instructed to text "zrecs" plus a company name and/or a product category to 69866. The service will text a message back (or occasionally two) providing the BPA status of products by that company and/or in that category. Current categories are bottles, sippys, pacifiers, and tableware.

FDA said to have relied on industry studies to approve Bisphenol A

Inside Indiana Business - Mar 24

Indiana Governor Mitch Daniels has signed into law the "Indiana Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Act of 2008" which contains new provisions that will help protect children from the dangers of lead poisoning. The bill provides a civil penalty of up to \$1,500 for incomplete reports of blood lead tests to the Indiana State Department of Health (ISDH). This gives ISDH greater authority to require complete information, so that children with elevated blood lead levels can be located quickly and given the help and services they need.

Health Canada reassures parents after arsenic found in pear juice

Health Canada - Mar 20

Health Canada is seeking to reassure parents about the recent recall of two brands of pear juice products as a result of higher than normal levels of arsenic. The recall, by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency and Loblaw's, was conducted as a precaution to prevent long-term exposure to arsenic. The levels that were found, while being higher than would normally be found in this type of juice, are not high enough to represent a risk to children or adults from short term exposure. In this case, Health Canada considers short term exposure to be a period of several weeks or months, while long term exposure would be consumption of these levels of arsenic over many years or decades.

Despite banning products containing phthalates in products intended for kids, the sex-toy industry remains largely unregulated

Edmonton Journal - Mar 21

Recently, Health Canada announced it would be banning the use of certain phthalates in products intended for kids, like teething rings and rattles. Meanwhile, the sex-toy industry is largely unregulated, and many toys contain chemicals that in certain animals may cause anything from

hormonal and reproductive problems to liver and kidney damage. "The sex-toy industry is largely unregulated. Products are sold as novelty items, which makes manufacturers immune to certain regulations that would provide more quality control," says Canadian sexologist Brian Parker. Parker hopes scientific evidence will lead to stricter industry regulations.

Heparin contaminant identified, may have been deliberately substituted to boost middlemen's profits

Los Angeles Times - Mar 20

A compound related to a common nutritional supplement has been identified as the contaminant in a blood-thinning drug imported from China that sickened hundreds of frail patients in the U.S. and is suspected in a number of deaths, federal officials said. The substance, hypersulfated chondroitin sulfate, mimics the real drug (heparin) in standard safety tests and may have been deliberately substituted for the genuine compound somewhere along the line to boost middlemen's profits. It could also have been added through a mishap or some kind of misguided experiment. Because of difficulties in back-checking, it's unclear whether Food and Drug Administration officials will ever know for sure.

Cosmetic supplier Cognis to launch several 'green' cosmetic ingredients

Cosmetics design-europe.com - Mar 20

Germany-based cosmetic ingredient supplier Cognis will be focusing on the green trend with several launches that combine 'environmental soundness' and natural sourcing. Among the green ingredients to be released will be a mild surfactant for oral care applications, a pearlizing agent for hair and body care and an active ingredient for hair removal products made from gymnemic acid. Besides its green launches Cognis will also roll-out a range of conventional ingredients including a liquid acrylic emulsion polymer, a texture agent for sun care applications and a delivery system with microcapsules, nanocapsules and visual beads.

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