

Gift Wraps: Killers in Disguise?

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By The Associated Press
Some holiday gift wrappings may be beautiful killers, says a professor who claims their lead contents could poison water supplies after being discarded and dumped.

Sidney A. Katz, a professor of chemistry at Rutgers University in Camden, says his tests found a high of 14,300 pounds of lead per million pounds of wrapping.

"Although we don't know whether a dump will ever hold a million pounds of wrapping, this puts it on a relative basis, and in itself, is an extraordinarily high lead content," Katz said.

But the figure has a special and dangerous significance for South Jersey dumping sites, the 43-year-old chemist says.

"Our sandy soil is very porous and the area generally has a high water level. When it rains, the discarded wrappings can leak their lead content into our drinking water," Katz says.

Katz concedes his experiments only simulated conditions, but he notes the Safe Water and Drinking Act limits lead particles in water to .05 pounds of lead per million pounds of water.

Using less than one ounce of water to dissolve the lead from random paper specimens, Katz found the lead levels were 10,000 times above the federal safety level.

Katz, who has devoted his 20 years at Rutgers to studying the role of trace elements in environmental systems, recommends alternative pigments to decorate holiday wrappings.

He also stressed the need for more stringent dumping regulations.

"This is particularly important in our area. The sites should either be made to be lined with plastic or with a clay base," Katz says.

Katz announced his findings at the Midwest Regional Meeting of the American Chemical Society in Fayetteville, Ark., last week.

"The Eastern Regional Meeting doesn't take place until sometime in March. And once the study was complete, we felt we should take the findings to the scientific community right away," Katz said.

Doll X-Ray Leads to Toy Recall

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Washington (UPI) — Half a million models of "Curious George" the toy monkey, "Scooby-Doo" the pup and two other stuffed animals are being recalled because the printing on their clothes contain too much lead.

The Consumer Product Safety Commission said yesterday that, although no ill-effects have been reported, it has found that the ink used to print the names on the toys' sweaters contains more lead than allowed by safety laws.

The Commission said the suspect toys involved are those models of "Curious George," "Scooby-Doo," an Easter chick called "Chick-A-Dee" and another dog called "Puppy Love" that were imported from South Korea between March, 1977, and April of this year.

The CPSC said the problem was discovered by accident when Mrs. Katherine Richardson, 29, of Randolph, Mass., took her 2-year-old daughter to the doctor for treatment of a bad cold.

When the little girl balked at submitting to an X-ray, the doctor said he would first X-ray the "Curious George" she had brought along to show her there was nothing to fear.

The CPSC said the doll's name showed up opaque on the X-ray, indicating lead content, and the mother complained to the commission.

"The toys can be identified by the numbers K-20, K-21, K-22, K-23, K-25 and K-32 imprinted on a tag affixed to the toy's seam," the CPSC announcement said. The style numbers 5465, 5466, 5467, 9750, 2270, 2271, 2285, 2286 and 9116 are imprinted on the toy's packaging.

New rules aid workers exposed to toxic lead

Washington — (AP) — The Labor Department today announced stringent new standards aimed at protecting 835,000 workers exposed to lead, a highly toxic and sometimes fatal substance.

The new standards, which sharply reduce worker exposure to lead, drew an immediate attack from the lead battery industry and is likely to trigger complaints from President Carter's inflation fighters.

The Labor Department's Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) announced that its standard, effective Feb. 1, would limit workers' lead exposure to 50 micrograms per cubic meter of air, averaged over eight hours.

The final standard compares with an initial standard of 100 micrograms proposed by OSHA three years ago. The current standard limits lead exposure to 200 micrograms.

OSHA estimates that 100,000 workers are exposed to lead levels in excess of 50 micrograms. When inhaled or ingested, lead can cause severe damage to the kidneys, central nervous system and the brain. In some cases, it can be fatal.

BUSINESS Briefs

New rules could cost \$3 billion

The Labor Department yesterday toughened federal regulations to protect workers, their families and unborn children from lead poisoning — estimating the changes could cost industry \$3 billion the first decade. A court challenge was filed immediately.

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"Lead is a pervasive industrial danger," said Dr. Edna Bingham, head of the department's Occupational Safety and Health Administration. She said exposed workers can develop irreversible kidney disease or anemia, run a risk of damaging their central nervous system, and can become sterile.

An estimated 835,000 workers are covered by the standards in industries such as lead smelting, manufacture of lead storage batteries, lead pigments and solder, ship building, auto manufacturing and printing. Grover Wrenn, OSHA director of health standards, said the interim standards could cost industry \$580 million in capital expenditure and \$124 million annually and the final standards about \$1 billion in capital and \$250 million to \$300 million annually.

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