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Spray can mystery: Which are bad ones?

By TOM SKOCH

Federal Government agencies have been issuing dire warnings and bans on aerosol spray products using vinyl chloride gas to power the spray.

They say the vinyl chloride is linked to a form of liver cancer.

You can get your money back on the spray cans, they say.

But trying to find which cans are unhealthy is enough to give you a stroke.

Forget about cashing in on refunds.

The cans don't usually

list vinyl chloride among the ingredients, a government researcher said. And not all use it.

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission last week added to the banned list some spray cans of paints, finishes, protective and decorative coatings, paint removers, adhesives and solvents. The ban will be effective in about a month.

Which brands? Which specific products?

The commission office here can't tell you, a spokesman said, until a list comes in from Washington.

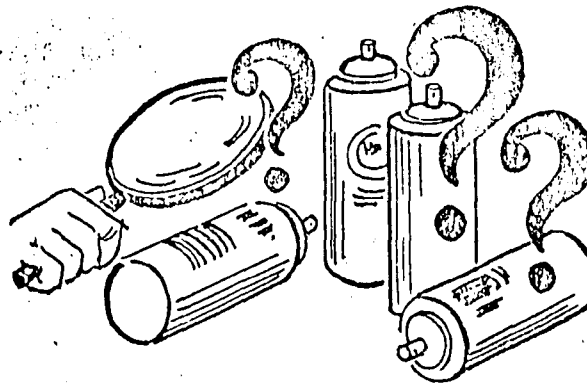
If you care to call Wash-

ington, you'll find out that they will try to get out a list — if the manufacturers tell them which products use vinyl chloride. But the manufacturers don't have to tell. They can notify stores directly.

Managers for two major discount chain stores here

say they can't recall ever getting vinyl chloride warnings from anyone about any products.

To top it off, a commission researcher in Washington says that most firms stopped using vinyl chloride in spray cans in the late 1960's, and every-



one stopped using it at least a few months ago.

So the ban is like capping the nozzle after all the spray got out.

To find out what specific food products, drugs and cosmetics are on the banned list, you would check with the Food and Drug Administration here. Theoretically.

They can give you a couple of product names out of more than 30 once listed in news clippings — cosmetics and drugs, that is. The FDA says it knows of no food products ever using the banned spray. But it is banned anyway.

The last banned items are some spray insecticides

and pesticides. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency banned those.

But the EPA office here says it only handles water pollution, and spray cans are air pollution. You are told to try calling the Chicago EPA office, or the Ohio EPA in Twinsburg. Maybe they know which ones.

But the Ohio EPA says to try the Ohio Health Department. Forget another long distance call to Chicago, you've dropped enough telephone change already.

About this time, you're ready for a stiff drink. Even if it comes from a spray can.

Birth defect rate high by vinyl plants

The Ohio Health Department is investigating what appear to be abnormally high birth defect rates in Painesville, Avon Lake and Ashtabula, where plants using vinyl chloride are located.

Dr. Peter F. Infante of the department's chronic disease division said today the information gathered thus far is very preliminary.

"I don't want anyone to

get the false impression that we believe the birth defect rate is related to vinyl chloride. At this point we do not know what it is related to," said Dr. Infante.

The higher rates, he said, were recorded from 1970 through 1973. The three communities had a total of 77 births in which congenital malformations were present in the four years.

Dr. Infante said other

agencies are looking at whether there may be higher rates of cancer incidence in the areas around vinyl chloride plants.

Last week The Press reported the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency had detected presence of vinyl chloride up to three miles from two Painesville area plants.

B. F. Goodrich Chemical Co., which produces polyvi-

nyle chloride in Avon Lake, issued a statement today which said:

"In our opinion, this report plays on the emotional fears of people. Government medical officials have told us they are highly skeptical of the scientific validity of the information. . . . The fact is there is no medical or scientific evidence establishing a relationship between vinyl chloride and birth defects."