

Vinyl Chloride Ban In Pesticide Sprays Requested by EPA

By a WALL STREET JOURNAL Staff Reporter

WASHINGTON — The Environmental Protection Agency asked manufacturers to voluntarily ban the use of the controversial chemical vinyl chloride in pesticide sprays.

The agency's request came in letters to 11 manufacturers and distributors of 23 brands of pesticide sprays that contain vinyl chloride, which has been linked with a rare liver cancer. The EPA said the pesticides involved include household disinfectants, insect killers used in restaurants and food-processing plants, various agricultural pesticides and wasp-control sprays. The vinyl chloride isn't an active ingredient of the pesticide but is used as a propellant for the spray.

The agency didn't name the brands or the manufacturers, but said it intends to do so later after giving the companies time to voice objections.

John Quarles, EPA deputy administrator, disclosed the development in a letter to the Health Research Group, a public-interest organization that had asked the EPA for a list of pesticides registered with the agency that contain vinyl chloride.

The EPA said that if the companies don't voluntarily substitute other chemicals for vinyl chloride the agency would consider forcing such a move. But the agency said it doesn't have a position at this time on the hazards connected with vinyl chloride.

Vinyl chloride, normally a gas, has been controversial since liver-cancer deaths have been reported in recent months among workers dealing with the substance. It is converted in factories into a powdery substance called polyvinyl chloride, from which a wide range of everyday plastic products is made.

The Labor Department's Occupational Safety and Health Administration has issued an emergency temporary health standard sharply reducing the allowable exposure of workers to the chemical starting April 8. It also proposed an even tougher permanent standard that bars workers without protective equipment from coming into contact with the chemical in any measurable concentration.

Nader group urges recall of vinyl chloride hair spray

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Ralph Nader's Health Research Group today urged two federal agencies to remove from the market immediately all hair sprays and pesticides containing vinyl chloride.

Dr. Sidney M. Wolfe, director of the consumer organization, directed the letters to the Food and Drug Administration and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

He noted that it has been more than a month since he petitioned for a ban, recalls and public identification of products containing the propellant chemical that is linked to several cases of liver cancer among industrial workers.

"Each day this action is delayed, more people will be exposed to this cancer-causing chemical," the letters said.

5 Louisville workers died

(Concern about the chemical has mounted since the recent announcements of an apparent link between the deaths of nine American chemical workers and their exposure to vinyl chloride fumes. Five of the men worked at the Bells Lane plant of the B.F. Goodrich Co. in Louisville, and two additional workers there have been diagnosed as having the same form of very rare cancer of the liver.)

Wolfe said the Health Research Group is aware of two brands of Clairol, Inc., hair spray that, until last year, contained vinyl chloride. He also mentioned that 24 pesticides, including dog and cat sprays, were known to contain the chemical as a propellant.

"Clairol's decision that there is no health hazard from vinyl chloride in their hair sprays rests on the erroneous assumption that there are 'safe' levels of exposure to carcinogens. There is no scientific evidence to support such a concept for vinyl chloride or for any other cancer-causing chemical," Wolfe said.

Clairol is doubtful of danger

Clairol vice-president John Menkart told Wolfe in a letter last Friday that a "small amount" of Summer Blonde and Miss Clairol hair spray containing vinyl chloride remains on the market but that

the firm believes it poses no health hazard.

Wolfe wrote to EPA Administrator Russell Train that his agency has asked pesticide manufacturers for permission to make public the names of products containing vinyl chloride and that it may request them to withdraw the chemical from the pesticides.

"Such withdrawals must be mandatory and immediate, if consumer protection is to be insured," he said.

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