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U.S. to study health effect of vinyl chloride aerosols

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission will sign a \$100,000 contract this week to study the long-term health effects of vinyl chloride spray on rats and mice.

Vice Chairman Lawrence M. Kushner said the research at Edgewood Arsenal near Aberdeen, Md., will attempt to measure the hazard to consumers who have been exposed for years to household aerosol products containing the cancer-causing chemical.

The contract with the Defense Department will not be completed for 18 months to two years, he said.

The studies will focus on the effects of short exposure at high levels, similar to the exposure experienced while using a hair spray or deodorant.

Laboratory animals at the old Army chemical warfare plant will be exposed for a one-hour period to vinyl chloride concentrations of 50, 500 and 5,000 parts per million (ppm) and then will be observed during their lifetimes to see if they contracted cancer or other liver damage.

Three generations of rats and mice also will be exposed to similar concentrations, to determine if the chemical causes birth defects and genetic injuries.

Kushner said the 24 cases of a rare form of liver cancer, angiosarcoma, linked to vinyl chloride have occurred among industrial workers exposed to high levels for eight-hour periods year after year. (At least six fatal cases have occurred among workers at the B. F. Goodrich Co. plant in Louisville.)

The average consumer using an aerosol spray "doesn't live with 50, 500 or 5,000 ppm for eight hours a day," he said.

Kushner said results of the studies will

be helpful in determining whether the commission and other regulatory agencies were correct in banning vinyl chloride propellants from aerosols as a public health precaution.

He said the work also may prove beneficial in the "continuing problem" of regulating plastics, of which vinyl chloride is a basic raw material.

On a related subject, the commission said it would be "weeks or months" before a list is compiled of vinyl chloride-containing aerosol paints that have been banned and can be returned for refunds.

The commission said the industry has 45 days from Oct. 8 to provide retail stores with a list of brand names of the millions of cans of paint.

The stores are required to post refund notices for customers.

Pacra Industries of Los Angeles, claiming economic hardship because of the refund provision, has asked an appellate court to review the commission's action.

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