



Greetings! Read below for our victory to end lead threats from children's lunchboxes and more CEH news

In this issue. . .

Leading Lunchbox Maker Agrees to Eliminate Lead Risks to Kids

Food Safety Rules Under Fire -- Action Needed by this Thursday, March 2 !

CEH Wins Landmark Settlement to End Lead Threats in Children's Jewelry

FoodMed Connects Hospitals with Resources for Healthier Food

California Passes Law Banning Lead-Tainted Candies

CEH News & Notes

Leading Lunchbox Maker Agrees to Eliminate Lead Risks to Kids

Children's lunchbox manufacturer InGEAR, the country's third-leading producer of lunchboxes and coolers, has reached an agreement with CEH to eliminate lead risks to children from their products in time for this summer's back-to-school shopping season.



InGEAR is the first company to settle the lawsuits CEH initiated last year against children's lunchbox makers and retailers. The company has agreed to set a strict standard for reducing lead in

all of its vinyl lunchboxes and coolers, and also agreed to eliminate its use of polyvinyl chloride (PVC, or "vinyl") plastic in the interior of lunchboxes, as PVC often contains high lead levels. PVC is considered the dirtiest of all plastics because it is often made with lead and other harmful additives and can release cancer-causing chemicals when it is produced and incinerated. "One simple way that lunchbox manufacturers can eliminate lead is to stop using vinyl and switch to safer materials that are currently available," said Green.

For more on lead-tainted lunchboxes, [the CEH website](#).

Food Safety Rules Under Fire -- ACTION NEEDED BY MARCH 2 !

A bill is now being considered in the U.S. House of Representatives that would eliminate many state laws that protect consumers from food hazards, even in many cases where there are no federal consumer protection rules. The bill, backed by factory farm and food industry lobbyists, has in the past received bipartisan opposition, but currently has 226 sponsors in the House (eight more than is needed to pass).

Under the guise of seeking "uniformity" in food safety laws, the bill (The National Uniformity for Food Act, H.R. 4167) would actually void many state food safety laws that are not identical to Food and Drug Administration (FDA) rules. However, there are many areas of state law in which FDA has taken no action –under HR 4167, all state laws even in these areas would be voided. For example, the bill would void the California law that requires warnings on fish containing dangerous levels of mercury. This law has prompted major retailers like Wild Oats and Safeway to post such warning signs nationwide. Since the states, and not the federal government, run most food safety programs in the U.S. today, the result of "uniformity" achieved by the law would in many instances be the uniform absence of food safety laws.

CEH opposes HR 4167, as do the California's State Attorney General Bill Lockyer, the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture, the Association of Food and Drug Officials, the National Conference of State Legislators, the Center for Science in the Public Interest, the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, and many others.

Take Action! The bill is expected to be heard on the House floor on Thursday, March 2! Call or write to your U.S. Congressperson and ask him/her to oppose HR 4167. States must have the right to insure food safety for their residents. [Click here](#) for a sample letter and contact information for Congressmembers, or call TODAY – the Congressional switchboard, 202-224-3121, can connect you to your Congressman's office. Please take one minute to call or write today -- urge Congress to oppose HR 4167!

CEH Wins Landmark Settlement to End Lead Threats in Children's Jewelry

In January, CEH and the California Attorney General settled lawsuits against major jewelry makers and retailers establishing the nation's first binding standards for eliminating lead risks to children and adults from jewelry. The landmark settlement followed more than two years of CEH-led research, investigations and mediation with seventy-one companies, including Target, Macy's, Nordstrom, Kmart, Claire's, Mervyn's, Toys R Us, Disney and Sears.

In the past few years, many children have suffered serious lead poisoning from jewelry exposures, prompting health warnings and nationwide jewelry recalls. Following the CEH lawsuits filed in June 2004, the country's largest-ever product recall was announced, when over 150 million pieces of toy jewelry were removed from gumball machines nationwide.

The settlement calls for companies to take swift action to eliminate or significantly reduce levels of lead by reformulating their jewelry, and sets out strict standards for children's pieces. The settlement is legally binding only in California, but CEH expects that the companies will reformulate their jewelry nationally. CEH will post the names of companies that make a national commitment, and those that have not, on our web site.

While most of the companies named in the lawsuits agreed to the settlement terms, five companies, including Wal-Mart, the nation's largest retailer, have not agreed to reformulate their jewelry. CEH expects to reach an agreement with these companies in the near future.

For more on our work to stop the sale of lead-jewelry, see the [CEH website](#).

FoodMed Connects Hospitals with Resources for Healthier Food

In November, the first-ever national FoodMed conference held in Oakland brought together major hospital food buyers with sustainable food advocates and representatives of some of the nation's largest natural food companies. Coordinated by Health Care Without Harm and the Kaiser Permanente and Catholic Health Care West hospital systems, nearly 300 people attended FoodMed and participated in sessions on buying organic, locally grown, and sustainably produced food.

CEH Food program Coordinator Charles Margulis led a session on organic food and brought the group a national resource list of dairy products made without artificial hormones. The conference agenda and downloads of presentations are available [online](#).

California Passes Law Banning Lead-Tainted Candies



On January 1st, a state law in California came into force that aims to end the sale of lead-tainted candies in the state. CEH supported this law, which was signed by Governor Schwarzenegger last fall after a three-year-long effort led by the Environmental Health Coalition (EHC). CEH and EHC initiated legal action in May 2004 to stop the sale of these candies, which are generally imported from Mexico. In July of that year, the California Attorney General and the district attorneys of Los Angeles city and Alameda County also filed lawsuits against Mexican candy makers.

Under the new law, the state must determine standards for lead in candies by July 2006. Settlements in the ongoing legal cases could also result in lead standards that would become state law. The state is also required to issue health warnings when tainted candies are found. CEH and EHC's lawsuits were largely based on the state's own candy testing that was never acted upon. CEH continues to work for the strongest possible protection for children against lead exposures.

CEH News & Notes

CEH staff member Mamta Khanna and her husband Bharat welcomed their first child, daughter Namah, on January 2. Namah arrived a few weeks early but is now home and doing well. We welcome Namah to the CEH family!

Mamta saw a first-hand example of our work to eliminate toxic health threats in health care in Alta Bates hospital in Berkeley, where Namah spent the first few weeks of life. Thanks to Health Care Without Harm and Physicians for Social Responsibility, the hospital's Neonatal Intensive Care Unit is PVC-free (medical devices like IV bags and tubes are routinely made with PVC, even though exposure to chemicals in PVC plastics have been linked in lab animals to developmental and reproductive health problems). Mamta was very relieved to know that the feeding tube Namah needed for the first two weeks of her life was PVC free!

CEH is pleased to re-welcome Sue Chiang! Many of you may remember that Sue Chiang managed our [Safe Playgrounds project](#), to inform schools and parents about arsenic in older wood playground structures. Sue has just rejoined CEH as Manager of our Pollution Prevention Program, where she will work with long-time CEH Senior Researcher Mamta Khanna, who is reducing her workload to spend time with new baby Namah! Sue has worked at the San Francisco Foundation, Environmental Defense, and other nonprofits, and completed a double-masters program at U.C. Berkeley's Goldman School of Public Policy and the Graduate School of Public Health. She is a long-time environmental health advocate and friend of CEH, and we are very glad to have her back!

CEH Senior Policy Analyst Joe Guth has shifted to another CEH project, working to protect environmental and health laws in California and nationally. CEH and more than twenty other organizations and law firms joined together in a coalition called the California League for Environmental Enforcement Now (CLEEN) several years ago, in support of the right of citizens to enforce California laws controlling toxic pollution. These laws include Prop 65, the main California law CEH has used in cases such as lead in jewelry and arsenic in wood playground structures. Joe has now taken the reins as the Executive Director of CLEEN, and continues to work in the CEH office. In late March, Joe will present on two panels at a statewide conference on the 20th anniversary of the Prop 65 law, and in his new role he is playing a leading role in responding to attacks on laws that protect consumers and the environment. For more, see [CLEEN's website](#).

CEH works closely with the Collaborative on Health and the Environment (CHE) to protect communities at risk from toxic exposures. Every month, CHE hosts a national conference call on environmental health topics. On February 28, the topic of the call is nanotechnology and public health. CEH's Charles Margulis drafted a background document on the risks of nanotechnology, which is available through CEH, contact cmargulis@cehca.org.