Articles of Concern:
Information from the WHO Chemical Incident Alert and Response System

Informal Workshop on Stakeholders’ Information Needs on Chemicals in Articles/Products,
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Introduction

- Chemical Incidents and Emergencies
  - Alert and Response
  - Capacity building
  - Networks

- Framework for action
  - WHO Constitution and WHA Resolutions
  - International Health Regulations (2005)
  - SAICM (chemical safety)
  - Humanitarian work (IASC)
### International Health Regulations (2005)

- International legal instrument designed to help protect all States from international spread of disease, including public health risks and public health emergencies.

- **Wide coverage:**
  - Events of biological, chemical, radionuclear origin; or
  - Events transmitted by persons, goods, vectors, or the environment.

### Some obligations and responsibilities (IHR 2005)

- National IHR Focal Point and WHO Contact Points.

- Capacities to detect, assess, and respond rapidly to public health events of international concern.

- Provide routine facilities, services, inspections and control activities at international points of entries.

- WHO to review information from other sources than notification and consultations, assess and communicate events.
Chemical Incidents Alert and Response

- Review of incident information
  - Webcrawler tools
  - Received from within WHO
  - Received from external WHO partners
- Assessment and verification
- Information sharing and alert
- Response
The following recalls have been announced:

--About 18,000 Backyard and Beyond metal water bottles, manufactured in China and distributed by Downeast Concepts Inc., because surface paints contain high levels of lead, which is toxic if ingested by children. No injuries have been reported. The water bottles were sold at gift, convenience, mass merchandise and drug stores around the country, as well as other major retailers, between February 2006 and February 2008. Details: by phone at 800-343-2424; by Web at

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Article Category</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Toys</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewellery and decoration items</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textiles</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>25</td>
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</table>
### Summary of chemical events involving articles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Article</th>
<th>Problem Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Toys, including sunglasses, Teletubbies, robots, horse toys, mini hockey stick, charms, teddy bears, puppet theatres, Bindeez Beads, other toys, baby pacifiers and paper money.</td>
<td>Mostly high levels of lead were detected in toys. Few stories report about mercury, cadmium, arsenic, phthalates, formaldehyde and 1,4-butanediol in these products.</td>
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<td>Jewellery and decoration items, including bracelets, metal necklaces, key chains and Easter items.</td>
<td>All stories mention high levels of lead.</td>
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<td>Textiles, including T-shirts, uniforms, underwear and clothing not further specified</td>
<td>Clothing containing dyes, formaldehyde, and methyl chloride as well as nonylphenolethoxylate that pollute water systems; formaldehyde in blankets</td>
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<tr>
<td>Others, including children’s products (e.g. baby bottles, drinking cups, food cans, lunch boxes, toilet seats), water bottles, writing pens, sleeping bags, magnets, grills as well as house trailers, shoes, furniture, cigarettes, shoes, lipsticks.</td>
<td>Most of the items reported contain lead; baby bottles and food cans containing bisphenol A; a leather sofa contained fungicides causing allergic reactions; house trailers contained formaldehyde; shoes contained pesticides; cigarettes containing mercury; a freezer was leaking chemicals.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### GPHIN and articles

- Multi-lingual
- Real-time monitoring
- Retrospective search
- Relatively few stories
- Development
  - Website to be visited
  - Crude and fine search
- One of many tools (e.g. MediSys)
Conclusions

- On a daily basis, WHO reviews health intelligence related to chemical incidents and emergencies.
- Between 2005-2008, WHO detected 66 events/stories that contain information on chemicals in articles and/or health risks related to articles.
- GPHIN is the principle source of this information. GPHIN:
  - Allows real time screening of the internet for articles of public health relevancy
  - Enables early detection of events as well as retrospective search
  - Is it useful for articles?
- Information on articles containing chemicals as identified by WHO is usually shared with WHO Departments, Regional and Country Offices, which in turn, inform national health authorities, if appropriate.

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