



Persatuan Pengguna Pulau Pinang Consumers Association of Penang

檳城消費人協會 பினாங்கு பயனீட்டாளர் சங்கம்

Websites:
www.consumer.org.my

10 Jalan Masjid Negeri, 11600 Pulau Pinang, Malaysia
Tel: 604-8299511 Fax: 604-8298109
email: consumerofpenang@gmail.com

Press Statement

22 March 2016

CAP: Eliminate Lead in Paints

The Consumers Association of Penang calls on the authorities to eliminate lead in paints. In our latest test on paints we found more than 60% of the samples tested contained exceedingly high lead levels.

In a test conducted by CAP and IPEN (*International POPS Elimination Network*), 39 cans of solvent-based enamel decorative paint were purchased from various stores in several towns in the states of Kedah and Penang. The paints represented 18 different brands produced by 17 manufacturers. Samples from these paints were analysed by an accredited laboratory in the USA for total lead content.

Key findings from the test include:

- Sixteen out of 39 enamel decorative paints contained a total lead concentration above 600 ppm (parts per million). Twelve samples contained dangerously high concentrations of lead above 10,000 ppm. The highest lead concentration detected was 150,000 ppm.
- Eleven of 18 analysed brands sold at least one paint with lead concentrations above 10,000 ppm including brands from multinational companies.
- Yellow paints were the most hazardous with 12 of 19 samples of yellow-coloured paints had lead concentrations greater than 10,000 ppm. In addition, this study also included 12 samples of red paints and eight white paints.

In general, paint can labels did not carry meaningful information about lead content or the hazards of paint with high lead content and some paints with high lead concentrations were falsely advertised as being “low lead.”

The World Health Organization (WHO) calls lead paint “a major flashpoint” for children’s potential lead poisoning and says that “since the phase-out of leaded petrol, lead paint is one of the largest sources of exposure to lead in children.” Children are exposed to lead when painted surfaces deteriorate over time and contaminate household dust and soils. Children, ages 0-6, engaging in normal hand-to-mouth behaviors are most at risk of damage to their intelligence and mental development from exposure to lead dust and soil.

The health impacts of lead exposure on young children’s brains are lifelong, irreversible and untreatable, Lead is also introduced into the gastrointestinal tract when children chew on objects such as toys, household furniture or other articles painted with lead paint. Continued use of lead paint is a primary source of childhood lead exposure. Urgent measures need to be taken to reduce critical sources of lead exposure to young children.

A previous study conducted by CAP in 1992 found that seven out of nine enamel paints contained lead above 600 parts per million. The highest amount of lead in that study was only 11,700 ppm.

In another earlier study of lead content in paints in Malaysia, seventy-two enamel paints purchased in Malaysia during the years 2004 to 2007 were analysed for total lead content. Results from this study were similar to those in the current study.

Presently there is no regulation in Malaysia limiting the amount of lead in paint for household and decorative use. Most highly industrial countries adopted laws or regulations to control lead in paints.

This study also found that some companies have falsely advertised their product as “lead free” or “contains no added lead. Stringent enforcement is needed to take action against this type of violation and for misleading consumers

In view of the latest test, CAP calls on the authorities to:

- Promulgate laws to eliminate lead in paints.
- Strictly enforce the Trade Description Act as it was found that there were some paint companies that have blatantly violated the act.

As lead has a strong impact on children, immediate action need to be taken to safe guard our future generation.

S.M. MOHAMED IDRIS
President
Consumers Association of Penang