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OHSU TOXICOLOGY CENTER ISSUES PUBLIC ALERTS ABOUT THE INGREDIENTS OF A POPULAR HAIR SALON TREATMENT

PORTLAND, Ore. - Oregon Health & Science University's Center for Research on Occupational and Environmental Toxicology (CROET) is responding to concerns raised by Portland-area hair salons about a product used for hair straightening. In response to these findings, CROET has issued two public alerts regarding the possible negative health impacts of this product.

The product being tested is called Brazilian Blowout. Upon receiving two samples from Portland-area salons, CROET asked the Department of Consumer and Business Services' Oregon Occupational Safety & Health Division to chemically analyze the products. The results of Oregon OSHA's testing showed that the two different formulations of the product contained between 4.85% and 10.6% formaldehyde. In addition, the second sample, which came from a bottle labeled "formaldehyde free", was tested using four different methods. The four test methods revealed that the product contained 10.6, 6.3, 10.6 and 10.4 percent formaldehyde respectively (variation by the type of test that was conducted.) Additional laboratory analysis also detected four additional chemicals in each sample that were not quantified in the lab, including methanol and ethanol.

If a product used in a workplace contains more than 0.1% formaldehyde, OSHA requires the manufacturer to list it and address safe work practices on the material safety data sheet accompanying the product. OSHA's Hazard Communication Standard requires employers to share this information with their potentially exposed employees through training. In addition, OSHA's Formaldehyde Standard applies to occupational exposures to formaldehyde, including from formaldehyde gas, its solutions and materials that release formaldehyde. This Formaldehyde standard includes requirements for employers to assure that no employee is exposed to an airborne concentration for formaldehyde which exceeds 0.75 parts formaldehyde per million in an eight-hour period. A short-term exposure can't exceed two parts per million (2 ppm) in a 15-minute period. The American Conference of Governmental Industrial Hygienists, an advisory group, recommends that employees not be exposed to greater than an upper or ceiling concentration of 0.3 ppm.

“The test results coupled with health symptoms reported to us from stylists using the specified hair product raised concerns at CROET because of the potential long-term and short-term impacts of formaldehyde exposure,” explained Dede Montgomery, an occupational safety and health specialist and certified industrial hygienist at CROET who is leading the studies.

“According to the Centers for Disease Control, formaldehyde can produce a variety of effects including immediate irritation of eyes, skin, nose and upper respiratory tract, cough, chest pain, shortness of breath and wheezing. The major concerns of repeated formaldehyde exposure are sensitization, which is similar to an allergic condition, and asthma in those who have been previously sensitized to formaldehyde. Additionally, the Department of Health and Human Services has determined that formaldehyde may reasonably be anticipated to be a carcinogen.”

Upon obtaining the results of this testing, CROET has issued two alerts through its website and shared its findings with the Food and Drug Administration, the California Department of Public Health, the state where the company is based and with Oregon OSHA. CROET will continue to work with Oregon OSHA.

Oregon OSHA is conducting additional testing and is working with California OSHA, Federal OSHA, the Oregon Department of Justice and Oregon Public Health.

Employers and workers with questions or concerns can call Oregon OSHA’s technical section at 503-378-3272 for more information. Employers can also request a confidential, on-site consultation by Oregon OSHA to assist in determining employee exposure.

“CROET will continue its research and collaboration with state and federal agencies. Based on the information we have received to date, we felt that additional public notification is required,” said R. Stephen Lloyd, Ph.D., interim director of CROET and a senior scientist within the center.

For additional information about CROET’s research on the ingredients of Brazilian Blowout, visit <http://www.ohsu.edu/xd/research/centers-institutes/croet/emerging-issues-and-alerts.cfm>

Timeline of events

Date	Action
7/2010	CROET is contacted by a Portland-area salon with concerns about a product called Brazilian Blowout Solution. The salon reported nosebleeds, eye irritation and breathing problems and had discontinued use of the product. The material safety data sheet accompanying the product listed no hazardous ingredients
7/29/2010	The Portland-area salon provides CROET with a bottle of the product and documentation that it was shipped to the salon on 8/27/2009. CROET sends the product to Oregon OSHA for testing.
8/19/2010	Oregon OSHA completes its testing and shares results with CROET.

	According to the test, the solution contains 4.85 percent formaldehyde. CROET shares information with affected salon. CROET continues researching information known about this product and learns about existence of newer formula.
9/02/2010	OHSU CROET receives a second sample of the Brazilian Blowout from a second salon. The product is labeled “Acai Professional Smoothing Solution” and a shipping label reports the product was shipped to the salon by the company on 8/12/2010. The bottle is also labeled “formaldehyde free,” CROET sends delivers the product to Oregon OSHA for testing.
9/17/2010	CROET posts a public alert to its website while awaiting sample analytical results for sample 2.
9/23/2010	Oregon OSHA completes its testing and shares the results with CROET. Four separate testing methods reveal the sample contained 10.6, 6.3, 10.6 and 10.4 percent formaldehyde respectively.
9/24/2010	CROET posts a second public alert to its Web site, begins additional public communications

Additional information about the formaldehyde

Federal Occupational safety & Health Administration: <http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/formaldehyde/>

The National Cancer Institute: <http://www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/factsheet/Risk/formaldehyde>

Centers for Disease Control: <http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/toxfaqs/tf.asp?id=219&tid=39>

About CROET

The Center for Research on Occupational and Environmental Toxicology is a center within OHSU dedicated to health and safety in the workforce. The center’s mission is to promote health, and prevent disease and disability among working Oregonians and their families during their employment years and through retirement. This is achieved through basic and applied research, outreach and education. CROET offers the public information on occupational health and safety online through the CROETweb resource directory and the Toxicology Information Center. CROET is comprised of more than 100 scientists and research staff. The center’s base funding is provided through the Oregon's Workers' Compensation system.

About OHSU

Oregon Health & Science University is the state’s only health and research university, and only academic health center. As Portland's largest employer and the fourth largest in Oregon (excluding government), OHSU's size contributes to its ability to provide many services and community support activities not found anywhere else in the state. It serves more than 184,000 patients, and is a conduit for learning for more than 3,900 students and trainees. OHSU is the source of more than 200 community outreach programs that bring health and education services to each county in the state.

About Oregon OSHA

Oregon OSHA, a division of the Department of Consumer and Business Services, enforces the state's workplace safety and health rules and works to improve workplace safety and health for all Oregon workers. The Department of Consumer and Business Services is Oregon's largest business regulatory and consumer protection agency. For more information, visit www.orosha.org.

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