



ASCIP *RISK ALERT!*

Date: April 3, 2009

Attention: ASCIP Members

Subject: Lead Hazards in Children's Books

In view of the recent media attention given to the incidents of Lead contamination being found in some children's toys, lunchboxes, drinking water and synthetic turf at several locations within the United States, the Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act (CPSIA) set new limits on lead content found in many children's products covered by the Act. These new limits are outlined in Section 101 of the Act and took effect on February 10, 2009.

One item outlined in the Act under the heading "Product Classes Whose Lead Content Is Consistently Below Lead Limits" is "Ordinary children's books printed after 1985". Consumer Product Safety Commission (CSPC) spokesperson Scott Wolfson states that books printed prior to 1985 may contain lead based ink, therefore libraries should only lend children's books that were printed in 1986 or later. Currently, the Center for Disease Control's Jay Dempsey states that lead-based inks in books poses minimal danger.

Lead is a toxic substance that, if ingested or inhaled, may result in a wide range of adverse health effects. Both children and adults can suffer health effects from Lead exposure. The most common of these health effects in small children are learning difficulties, behavioral problems and hearing difficulties.

The most common Lead exposures involving young children are those of peeling or chipping paint. These paint chips are easily broken down into small particles (sometimes dust) and then ingested by the child during play, exploration, and other activities. While many new books may not contain Lead at all, others which have metal or plastic covers and/or other components may expose children to Lead if they chew, lick or otherwise place such items in their mouths.

The California Health & Safety Code, prohibits the manufacture or sale to any retailer certain products that may be contaminated with paints or lacquers that contain Lead in excess of Federal regulations. While this regulation may help prohibit the sale of Lead contaminated books and products in California, the regulation is unlikely to prevent all such books from being sold or used in California.

Since not all books and other products with excessive Lead content may be detected prior to sale, it is important to be diligent in the review of recall notices posted by various safety organizations and the manufacturers themselves. ASCIP recommends that each educational agency review these concerns within its own organization to ensure that books and other products purchased or acquired for institutional use, such as in child care, parenting, and other areas where children may be at risk are Lead-free or, if containing Lead, are within the recommended Federal and State guidelines.

Schools may elect to ensure that parents are aware of the concerns related to childhood Lead exposure and, where suspect products are observed in the hands of students, develop a mechanism by which those parents might be alerted to check the safety of such items.

ASCIP staff is available to assist in addressing potential Lead exposure concerns as they may arise.

Related Risk Alerts:

[Lead Hazards in Drinking Water](#)
[Potential Lead Hazards in Synthetic Turf](#)
[Lead Hazards in Toys and Lunchboxes](#)