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Lead in Household Decorative Paints, Call for Urgent Actions

Lead Exposure Can Cause Permanent Brain Damage in Children

[25/10/2017, New Delhi] More than 73 percent of paints analyzed in a new study on total lead in solvent-based decorative paints contained high lead levels. 11 out of 15 paints from 13 brands analyzed contained exceedingly high lead levels. These 11 paint cans label were not having any consumer information about lead content. These findings are part of a new report released by Delhi based NGO Toxics Link in association with global NGO network IPEN (International POPS Elimination Network).

“The health impacts of lead exposure on young children’s intelligence are lifelong, irreversible and untreatable,” said Satish Sinha, Associate Director Toxics Link. “We are limiting our children and our nation’s future intellectual development even though safe and effective alternatives are already in use and widely available. We must reduce this critical source of lead exposure to young children.”

“Continued use of lead paint is a primary source of childhood lead exposure,” said Dr. Prashant Rajankar. “Children – especially those under 6 years of age – ingest or inhale lead through exposure to dust or soil contaminated with lead-based paint, household furniture or other articles painted with lead paint.

The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change has set the mandatory lead limits of 90 PPM in household paints, which will come into force from November 2017. However high lead levels are found in most of the samples analyzed at this point of time raise concerns on the implementation of the rules. Hence the concern agencies need to put strict compliance and monitoring mechanism in place to ensure implementation of the standard. The study also shows that high lead level is found mostly in the paints of small and medium scale enterprises (SMEs). At the same time low lead level is found in one sample indicates that SMEs have also the potential to make lead safe paints.

Toxics Link, released the report “**Toxics Paints : A research report on Lead Content in Household and Decorative Paints** ” as a part of worldwide activities to mark the International Lead Poisoning Prevention Week of Action (ILPPWA), Oct 22 -28, 2017. The Week of Action is co-led by UN Environment and the World Health Organization (WHO) and International POPs Elimination Network (IPEN).

According to Piyush Mohapatra “Lead paint is a serious threat to the long term health of our children. Lead (pb) paint is still on sale in many countries and is used to decorate homes and schools. WHO also urges all countries to phase out lead paint by 2020 to protect the health of this and future generations?”

In September 2017 Toxics Link purchased a total of 15 cans of solvent-based, enamel decorative paints from various stores in Delhi region. The paints represented 13 different brands produced by 7 manufacturers. Samples from these paints were analyzed by an accredited laboratory in India for total lead content.

Key findings from the report include:

- A majority of these paint samples, 11 out of 15, found high lead (including a sample labeled with no added lead)
- The highest lead concentration detected was 74200 ppm in a yellow paint sold in Delhi
- Very high lead concentrations above 10,000 ppm were found in 6 paint samples and 11 paint samples had lead concentrations above 90 ppm
- Only 4 paint samples analyzed in this study are adhering to the lead in paints regulation of the country.
- All these four samples have lead concentration below 90 ppm.
- Only 4 out of 15 paints provided information about lead on their labels.
- Out of these four samples tested below 90 PPM, two samples are from SMEs.

In November, 2016 the Ministry of Environment Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) issued the gazette notification “The Regulation of Lead Contents in Household and Decorative Paints Rules, 2016.”

Important features of regulation are as follows;

- Restrict the use of lead in paints and the regulations meant for all the decorative and household paints sold in India
- Restrict the lead content of these paints to 90 PPM.
- Labeling and self certification on paints by the manufacturers for 90 ppm.



- Authorized laboratories have been assigned to test the samples
- The central pollution control board will be the nodal agency to check compliance of the standard

Most highly industrial countries adopted laws or regulations to control the lead content of decorative paints—the paints used on the interiors and exteriors of homes, schools, and other child-occupied facilities—beginning in the 1970s and 1980s. 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.

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About Toxics Link – Toxics Link (www.toxics.ink.org) is an Indian environmental research and advocacy organization set up in 1996, engaged in disseminating information to help strengthen the campaign against toxics pollution, provide cleaner alternatives and bring together groups and people affected by this problem. Toxics Link’s Mission Statement - “Working together for environmental justice and freedom from toxics. We have taken upon ourselves to collect and share both information about the sources and the dangers of poisons in our environment and bodies, and information about clean and sustainable alternatives for India and the rest of the world.”

About IPEN – IPEN (www.ipen.org) is an international NGO network comprised of 700 organizations in 116 countries that work to reduce and eliminate hazardous, toxic substances internationally and within their own countries

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