

OHSU Toxicology Research Center issues public alert on popular hair salon treatment

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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. CROET has issued two public alerts describing its findings on the possible negative health impacts of this product.

The product being tested is called Brazilian Blowout. After 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 two different formulations of the product contained between 4.85 percent and 10.6 percent 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 percent, 6.3 percent, 10.6 percent and 10.4 percent formaldehyde, respectively. Variations occurred based on 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 percent 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 educate their potentially exposed employees about safe usage. In

addition, OSHA's Formaldehyde Standard applies to occupational exposures to formaldehyde, including from formaldehyde gas, its solutions and materials that release formaldehyde. The formaldehyde standard includes requirements for employers to ensure that no employee is exposed to an airborne concentration of formaldehyde that exceeds 0.75 parts formaldehyde per million in an eight-hour period. A short-term exposure can't exceed two parts per million 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 parts per million.

"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 and Prevention, 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," said Montgomery.

After obtaining the results of this testing, CROET issued two alerts through its Web site 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 at the center.

More information: For additional information about CROET's research on the ingredients of Brazilian Blowout, visit www.ohsu.edu/xd/research/center-issues-and-alerts.cfm
Additional information about formaldehyde Federal Occupational Safety & Health Administration: www.osha.gov/SLTC/formaldehyde/

Provided by Oregon Health & Science University

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