

**August 10, 2006**

## **Guidance for libraries that purchased bendable animal toys as incentives for the summer reading program.**

The Indiana State Health Department issued a consumer health alert on August 4, 2006 after testing found that animal toys given away by libraries participating in a summer reading program contained unsafe levels of lead. Martha Shinnars, the coordinator of the Collaborative Summer Reading Program at the Washington State Library, learned of the alert on August 8, and notified Oregon librarians by email and telephone.

### **How much lead was found in the toys?**

Tests conducted by the Indiana Department of Health found the toys contained .4 and .24 percent lead. Follow-up tests by Highsmith Publications found similar levels. The maximum federal allowable level for lead in toys is .06 percent.

### **What do the toys look like?**

The toys are bendable dogs and cats in assorted styles and are about 4 inches long. See photo below.



### **Where were the toys purchased?**

The bendable animal toys were available through Highsmith as a reading incentive for "Paws, Claws, Scales and Tales" 2006 Collaborative Summer Library Program. The bendable dog and cat toys are also available from several other toy distributors.

### **How can these products harm children?**

These toys are a potential health hazard and children should not be handling them. Since the toys are small, children may put them in their mouths and suck or chew on them. Handling lead-containing objects and then putting their hands in their mouths can expose children to lead. If a parent has seen their child chewing or sucking on one of the toys, they should contact their health care provider and consider a blood lead test.

### **How does exposure to lead harm a child?**

Young children are more at risk for exposure to lead because children explore their environment by putting their toys, hands and other objects in their mouths. Lead can interfere with normal brain development, resulting in permanently reduced IQ and behavioral problems. Even small amounts of lead can be harmful. Exposure to lead paint dust from older homes is the most common cause of childhood lead poisoning in Washington.

### **How should we notify families about the recall of these toys?**

- Post photographs of the recalled toys in a visible area of the library.
- If resources allow, directly contact families enrolled in the summer reading program.
- Have lead poisoning prevention educational materials available for parents.
- Include recall information in newsletters or other mailings going out to library patrons.

The Department of Health has issued a press release and posted recall information, including a list of the libraries that purchased these toys is on our website at [www.doh.wa.gov/EHSPHL/Epidemiology/NICE/Lead/default.htm](http://www.doh.wa.gov/EHSPHL/Epidemiology/NICE/Lead/default.htm).

### **What should we tell families?**

Washington public health officials are alerting families that bendable toys given to children as summer reading program incentives pose a potential health hazard. Families who received these toys should take them back to their local library. If a parent has seen their child chewing or sucking on one of the toys, they should contact their health care provider and consider a blood lead test.

### **What should we do with the remaining toys that have not been given away?**

Highsmith is supporting all libraries in their recall of this product from their patrons due to the uncertainty involving its potential health risk. Highsmith will issue a credit or refund for all sales of this product. Customers should call 1-800-448-4887 to arrange for their credit or refund or to return product.

### **If families return the toys to the library, how should we dispose of them?**

- Put the toys into a plastic bag, box and return to Highsmith.
- If you are not returning the toys to Highsmith, dispose of the toys in the trash.
- Library staff should wash their hands after handling the toys.

### **Who can I call for more information about this health alert?**

For more information on this health alert or to order lead poisoning prevention educational materials call the Department of Health at 360-236-4252.

**Where can I refer families if they have questions about lead?**

The Washington lead hotline, (800) 909-9898, is a free telephone information service for parents and others who are concerned about lead and want to know more about preventing lead poisoning.

**Washington State Department of Health**

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[www.doh.wa.gov/EHSPHL/Epidemiology/NICE/Lead/default.htm](http://www.doh.wa.gov/EHSPHL/Epidemiology/NICE/Lead/default.htm)