



CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
Department of Toxic Substances Control

News Release

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Businesses Cited for Selling Toxic Jewelry; Consumers Urged to Return Items

SACRAMENTO - The California Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) is pursuing enforcement actions against 11 retailers and suppliers for allegedly selling costume jewelry for children and adults containing dangerous levels of lead and cadmium. Some of the items had labels falsely claiming to be "Lead Free" or "Lead Compliant."

DTSC's Office of Criminal Investigations removed the toxic jewelry during inspections earlier this year at eight retail stores in Oakland and three wholesale suppliers in downtown Los Angeles. Consumers are urged to discard or return the items, which include hair accessories, necklaces and bracelets. Photos of the jewelry and the names of the stores where they were found can be [viewed here](#).

"California has laws restricting lead and cadmium content in jewelry, but the manufacture and distribution of these noncompliant items continues to be a problem," said Hansen Pang, OCI Chief Investigator. "DTSC will continue to work to keep toxic jewelry, particularly the children's variety, out of the marketplace."

DTSC issued Notices of Violation against all 11 businesses and is in the process of distributing fact sheets to retailers in Oakland to educate them about state requirements. State law prohibits the sale of jewelry with excessive lead and cadmium, and requires retailers to obtain certification from suppliers that jewelry is in compliance. Failure to comply may result in penalties up to \$2,500 a day for each violation.

Parts of the children's jewelry contained up to 96 percent lead, which far exceeds legal limits of either 0.06 percent or 0.02 percent, depending upon the jewelry material. Up to 99 percent cadmium was found in parts of the children's jewelry, which exceeds the 0.03 percent legal limit.

Exposure to lead can cause serious health problems, especially in children, ranging from behavioral problems and learning disabilities to organ failure and even death. Cadmium is a known carcinogen, and chronic cadmium exposure can lead to kidney damage, bone loss and death.

The recent inspections were conducted as part of an initiative by the California Environmental Protection Agency's [Environmental Justice Task Force](#) to investigate and address environmental concerns in Oakland. The task force conducts multi-agency compliance and enforcement initiatives in environmentally burdened communities throughout the state.

In 2013 and 2015, DTSC obtained settlements and judgments totaling more than \$575,000 against

companies in Southern California that distributed jewelry containing high concentrations of lead. The fines stemmed from a 2012 lawsuit by DTSC and the California Attorney General's Office.

California's Metal-Containing Jewelry Law prohibits the manufacture, shipping, sale, or offering for promotional purposes jewelry that contains excessive amounts of lead or cadmium. Retailers are required to obtain certifications from suppliers that all jewelry and its components are in compliance with the law; suppliers are required to have documentation showing jewelry items sold in California are in compliance with the law.

These enforcement actions, as well as other results of the CalEPA Environmental Justice Task Force, will be discussed at upcoming community meetings in Oakland on July 13 and 20, 2017. More information about these meetings is available [here](#).

[Click here](#) for Fact Sheet on California's Metal-Containing Jewelry Law.

[Click here](#) for Frequently Asked Questions.



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FOR GENERAL INQUIRIES: Contact the Department of Toxic Substances Control by phone at (800) 728-6942 or visit www.dtsc.ca.gov. To report illegal handling, discharge, or disposal of hazardous waste, call the Waste Alert Hotline at (800) 698-6942.

The Mission of DTSC is to protect California's people and environment from harmful effects of toxic substances by restoring contaminated properties, identifying and promoting safer ingredients in consumer products, and ensuring stewardship through enforcement, regulation and pollution prevention.