

January 13, 2006

## Lead in Candy

**To:** Announcement via e-mail to Nevada Food Safety Committee members

**From:** Robert Sobsey, Lead Chair

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NFSTF Members:

The Nevada Food Safety Task Force position on the lead in candy issue appears to be moving in a positive direction. For those who were unable to attend the last NFSTF meeting, members voted to support the APHA resolution concerning lead levels in candy.

Here is an update on the lead in candy issue you have requested. In 2004, Bryan Wagner and I as representatives of the Washoe County Health Department, together with Dr Colleen Hughes, co-authored an American Public Health Association (APHA) resolution on lead in candy. In November 2004, the APHA adopted our provisional resolution on lead in candy. This APHA lead in candy resolution was adopted in final form in December of 2005. The FDA is proposing guidelines in the *Federal Register* that mirrors the standards recommended in the lead in candy portion of our APHA resolution. The FDA is now recommending the reduction of lead in candy from its current guideline of 0.5 parts per million (ppm) lead to 0.1 ppm lead. The FDA is also recommending setting a lead standard for salt-based candy at 0.1 ppm. The FDA has given a 75 day comment period on these proposed standards.

Our Health Officer, Dr. Mary Anderson, has noted that, "This is a good example of local public health efforts having a nationwide result." We originally initiated this study on lead in candy because we strongly believe that the Washoe County District Health Department's food program must be proactive in protecting the health of the citizens it serves.

The APHA has applauded the FDA's action (see American Public Health Association Applauds FDA's Move to Decrease Lead in Children's Candy, at [http://www.apha.org/news/press/2005/1222805\\_candy\\_controll.htm](http://www.apha.org/news/press/2005/1222805_candy_controll.htm)).

A brief history concerning this issue is as follows:

In 2004 we initiated a study on lead in candy from Mexico. This study was initiated after we learned that the California Department of Health Services had tested Mexican candy for years and on numerous occasions found it high in lead, yet failed to inform the public of this fact.

Our 2004 study showed that there were high lead levels in the Lucas® salt-based candy (see Lead in Candy Poses a Health Threat, at [http://www.co.washoe.nv.us/health/ehs/index.php~color=grey&text\\_version](http://www.co.washoe.nv.us/health/ehs/index.php~color=grey&text_version)).

From this study we learned that the FDA had failed to set any standard for lead in salt-based candy.

We, along with Dr. Colleen Hughes, drafted a resolution recommending the FDA set a lead standard on all candy, both sugar and salt-based, at 0.1 ppm (see Responsibility of the Food and Drug Administration to Set and Enforce Lead Standards to Protect Children from Overexposure to Lead in Candy Products, at <http://www.apha.org/legislative/policy/2004/LB04-2.pdf>).

Our resolution was provisionally accepted by the American Public Health Association (APHA) in November of 2004.

In December on 2005, the APHA approved our final version of this resolution. The policies that were adopted by the APHA Governing Council are now being edited and will be posted on the Association's website, APHA.org, <http://www.apha.org>, later this month. The APHA will issue a news release about the policies in the next few weeks.

Shortly after the final version of the APHA resolution was approved; the FDA announced new guidelines on lead in candy.

We expanded the final version of our APHA resolution. For example, the final version of the resolution also includes APHA's position that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) needs to substantially lower its blood lead "level of concern" standard. There has been very little press on this very important public health issue. The CDC has failed to lower its blood lead "level of concern" standard, even after scientific evidence showed a causal association between the CDC's blood lead "level of concern" standard and substantially toxicity (manifested in the form of IQ losses) in young children. From a public health perspective the CDC's blood lead "level of concern" standard is an important standard because this standard is used as an intervention level by health care providers. In addition, this standard is used to set lead regulatory standards by other agencies. Furthermore, this standard is used to set the Healthy People 2010 blood lead level goal. For the detailed rationale, as to why it is so critically important to lower the CDC's blood lead "level of concern" standard, see the final version of the APHA resolution, attached hereto and entitled, Protecting Children from Overexposure to Lead in Candy and Protecting Children by Lowering the Blood Lead "Level of Concern" Standard.

This final version, while approved by the APHA, has not yet been placed on the APHA's website. You can call the APHA on this resolution at Media Relations, (202) 777-2509.

Robert Sobsey, Lead-Chair  
Nevada Food Safety Task Force

Bryan Wagner, Regulatory Chair  
Nevada Food Safety Task Force