



News Release

T – 05 – 12

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 17, 2012

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Bad Bling: LA Jewelers Cited for Selling Lead Tainted Jewelry State finds 343 tainted items- some labeled Lead Free.

LOS ANGELES, CA – Backing up repeated warnings about selling toxic jewelry the California Department of Toxic Substances Control ([DTSC](#)) and the Center for Environmental Health ([CEH](#)) announced today that the state Attorney General's Office has filed a complaint against 16 businesses that have allegedly been supplying retailers or directly selling Californians jewelry containing high levels of lead. In addition, CEH has initiated legal action against another six jewellers for alleged violations of the state's Proposition 65 law. Some of the toxic jewelry had labels claiming to be "lead free."

A total of 343 tainted jewelry items, some of which were imported from Asia, were discovered as part of DTSC's ongoing efforts to protect consumers from unnecessary toxic chemicals in everyday products.

The jewelry items, most of which were discovered at Joia Trading, Inc., located at 1020 S. Crocker Street, Los Angeles, contained metals which are potentially toxic to people, especially young children. DTSC alleges the 15 other businesses named in the complaint supplied the lead-tainted jewelry to Joia Trading. Furthermore, DTSC and CEH discovered some jewelry items for sale which contained high levels of cadmium, a toxic metal.

Exposure to lead can cause negative health effects ranging from behavioral problems and learning disabilities to organ failure and even death. Cadmium is a known carcinogen. *Chronic cadmium ingestion can lead to kidney damage, bone loss problems and death.* Children are particularly vulnerable as they often chew suck or bite the jewelry containing these toxic metals.

"California has had laws on the books since 2006 restricting the lead content in jewelry, yet we continue to see widespread violations of these safeguards," said DTSC Deputy Director of Enforcement Brian Johnson. "Jewelry sellers and suppliers know that it is not acceptable to sell toxic jewelry, especially children's jewelry. Today's complaints make good on our commitment to take action against those who violate these laws."

"Six years after our legal work helped set the state standard banning lead in jewelry, it's disappointing to see that wholesalers who supply jewelry stores across California are still selling so many lead and cadmium-tainted items," said Michael Green, CEH executive director. "We're pleased to be working with the state to end these unnecessary health threats from toxic jewelry."

Speaking in Los Angeles, surrounded by jewelry vendors and distributors, DTSC and CEH officials allege that the 16 companies named in the civil complaint have violated California's Metal Containing Jewelry Law. Some have also allegedly:

- (i) made untrue or misleading statements;
- (ii) made false or misleading advertising claims; and
- (iii) engaged in unlawful, unfair or fraudulent business practices in violation of California's unfair competition law.

State officials explained that from November 2009 to May 2012 they visited 11 stores and warehouses as part of their enforcement of [California's Metal-Containing Jewelry Law](#). Investigators discovered over 340 jewelry items containing lead levels exceeding regulatory limits. DTSC and CEH officials displayed samples of the tainted jewelry and demonstrated methods used to initially screen the jewelry for lead and cadmium content. The jewelry was then sent to laboratories for further testing. An analysis by the DTSC Environmental Chemistry Lab found that some of the jewelry items exceeded the legal limit of metals by as much as 1,000 times the legal limit in California.

[Click here](#) to see pictures of some of jewelry items:

“Heavy metals like lead and cadmium are incredibly toxic to humans,” said Johnson. “We will not tolerate the exposure of our children to toxic substances in costume jewelry.”

CEH has a 15-year record of protecting communities from the health impacts of toxic pollution and has previously uncovered lead and other toxic health threats to children from wood playground structures, toys, vinyl baby bibs and lunchboxes, imported candies, children's medicines, and many other products. CEH also works with major industries and leaders in green business to promote healthier alternatives to toxic products and practices.

California's Metal-containing Jewelry Law prohibits the manufacture, shipping, sale, or offering for promotional purposes jewelry for retail sale or promotional purposes in California jewelry that contains excessive amounts of lead or cadmium, among other regulated toxic metals. Cadmium levels in children's jewelry must be no more than 300 parts per million, by weight. Under state law, lead levels in children's jewelry must be below 600 parts per million for metallic jewelry. Other materials used in children's jewelry items must contain less than 200 parts per million lead. In adult jewelry, permissible lead levels are set as high as 60,000 parts per million or as low as 600 parts per million, depending on the type of material used in the jewelry.

Note to editors

In April 2012, DTSC released a study that showed toxic chemicals were present in nail polishes that were labeled as “toxic-free.” www.dtsc.ca.gov/PollutionPrevention/SaferNailProducts.cfm

- [Click here](#) for copy of AG complaint
- [Click here](#) for more info on Center for Environmental Health
- [Click here](#) for more info on DTSC enforcement

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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.