

Calif. panel and Health Canada each rule against more restrictions on BPA

By [Mike Verespej](#) | PLASTICS NEWS STAFF

Posted July 17, 2009 WASHINGTON (July 17, 12:50 p.m. ET) -- Three studies by Health Canada affirming the safety of bisphenol A in bottled water, infant formula and baby jars, and the decision by a committee of a California scientific advisory board not to list BPA on the a state list of toxic chemicals, have given a boost to the industry's contention that BPA is safe.

California's Developmental and Reproductive Toxicant Identification Committee, in three separate votes on July 15, voted 7-0 not to list BPA on the state's list of toxic chemicals under the voter-approved Proposition 65.

The vote came after the committee heard testimony from 24 individuals or organizations urging the panel to add BPA to California's list of chemicals known to cause cancer, birth defects or reproductive harm.

The committee's action apparently isn't the last word on the issue. The Natural Resources Defense Council immediately filed a petition with the state Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment to have BPA listed as a toxic substance, based on findings released last year by the National Toxicology Program—one of the organizations listed by the state as an authoritative body whose findings can trigger the addition of a chemical to the list.

But Steve Hentges, executive director of the polycarbonate/BPA global group of the plastics division of the American Chemistry Council, said the committee's unanimous decisions—one member was absent—is important in California, and also potentially in other places that may consider restrictions on BPA.

“The California decision is significant because the committee members are the state's qualified experts with seven of them from academia and just one from industry,” Hentges said. “These are not politicians, but scientists who have scientific standards to measure things against.”

Critically, the three separate votes on the safety of BPA with regard to male toxicity, female toxicity and development toxicity were unanimous—which Hentges said was significant because those three areas are where most claims are made suggesting that BPA poses a health risk.

“Whether it has an influence elsewhere I can't say, but I believe it will,” Hentges said, because the finding made by the committee is consistent with the view of 11 national regulatory bodies that have concluded that BPA is safe for use in consumer products.

Connecticut, Minnesota, the city of Chicago and Suffolk County, N.Y., earlier this year approved bans on the use of BPA in baby bottles and cups for infants. Wisconsin, California, Michigan, New York and several counties in New York are considering similar bans.

In addition, the six major manufacturers of baby bottles in the U.S. have agreed not to make bottles that contain BPA, and Health Canada has said it would draft regulations to ban the import and sale of baby bottles containing BPA.

While not backtracking from that stance, Health Canada issued three separate reports July 9, affirming the safety of bottled water, powdered infant formula, and baby foods in glass jars with metal lids—all of which contain BPA.

“The low levels of BPA found in jarred baby food products currently available for sale in Canada confirms Health Canada’s previous assessment that the currently dietary exposure to BPA through food packaging is not expected to pose a health risk to the consumer,” said Health Canada’s Food Directorate in a statement that accompanied its research report.

Health Canada added that “BPA was not detected in any” of the powdered infant formula cans it tested and that “the contribution of BPA levels in bottled water to the overall exposure [of people to BPA] is negligible for the general population. The consumption of water from polycarbonate carboys does not pose a safety concern.”

The Health Canada report noted that an adult would have to drink 264 gallons of water every day to even approach the safe intake limit for BPA recently established in Canada.

“This really helps to clarify Health Canada’s view,” Hentges said. “This new government data confirms Health Canada’s previous conclusion that exposure to BPA through food packaging uses is not expected to pose a health risk to the general population, including newborns and young children.”