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- Some 'lucky' charms sold by streets vendors found with lead

# Some 'lucky' charms sold by streets vendors found with lead

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A toxic chemicals watchdog expressed alarm after some dog-inspired "lucky" charms sold at outdoor markets were found to contain lead that could cause brain damage and other health issues.

Medical experts said that lead exposure among children even at low doses can disrupt brain development and cause lifelong learning and behavioral problems.



EcoWaste Coalition / MANILA BULLETIN

Lead exposure among women and workers can result in miscarriage, reduced sperm count, hypertension and many other lead-induced health concerns.

The EcoWaste Coalition issued the warning after purchasing eight samples of the charms that were believed to bring good fortune in 2018 which is the Year of the Dog under the Chinese Zodiac.

The charms were bought from street vendors in Quiapo, Manila which were being sold at the price range of P25 to P250 each.

Using a handheld X-Ray Fluorescence (XRF) device, the EcoWaste Coalition had screened the items for lead, a toxic metal.

The XRF readings indicated the presence of lead in four samples in the range of 205 to 6,578 parts per million (ppm) exceeding the regulatory limit of 90 ppm.

“The use of lead paint in products that are meant to attract good luck is objectionable as lead is known to be harmful, especially for children,” said Thony Dizon, Chemical Safety Campaigner, EcoWaste Coalition.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has warned that “children are particularly vulnerable to the neurotoxic effects of lead, and even relatively low levels of exposure can cause serious and in some cases irreversible neurological damage.”

“While not intended for children’s use, kids may be attracted to play with these dog-inspired lucky charms and expose them to lead in the paint, a common source of childhood lead exposure,” Dizon said.

“The lead painted surfaces may chip over time or when the product is broken. Children may pick and eat the lead-containing paint chip or ingest the lead-contaminated dust through their typical hand-to-mouth behavior,” he explained.

The government through the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Administrative Order 2013-24, or the Chemical Control Order for Lead and Lead Compounds, directed the phase-out of lead-containing architectural, household and decorative paints from 2013-2016.

The EcoWaste Coalition advised consumers to demand the presence of chemicals to be stated in product information and to shun products with undisclosed chemical content.

The group also urged vendors of charms to obtain a certificate of laboratory analysis from manufacturers, importers or distributors confirming that a product does not contain lead and other chemicals such as arsenic, cadmium, hexavalent chromium and mercury which could prove harmful if above “allowable” limits.

The group further urged lucky charm makers to properly label their products in line with the consumer’s right to information, which is protected under the Consumer Act of the Philippines. The group noted that none of the eight products had any basic labels about their manufacturer, importer or distributor.

“Consumers should have access to adequate, truthful and understandable product information, which is essential in the exercise of the consumer right to choose and to complain and seek redress against hazardous and shoddy goods,” Dizon said.

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