Tainted toothpaste shows up up the U.S.

Spotlight on Rwanda

By John Hoffman, Dental Tribune

The recall of toothpaste made in China—or elsewhere—that may be laced with diethylene glycol, a lethal thickening agent used in antifreeze, is widening and now includes toothpaste sold in the U.S.

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has found diethylene glycol in tubes of counterfeit Colgate sold in several dollar-type discount stores in New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Maryland. In addition, an importer of Chinese toothpaste has issued a nationwide recall after FDA found diethylene glycol in legally imported Chinese toothpaste, and a Puerto Rican supermarket chain has also recalled toothpaste imported from China.

The problem with toothpaste containing diethylene glycol was first uncovered in May when health officials in Panama, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Nicaragua and Australia, found the toxic industrial chemical in Excel and Mr. Cool, two brands of Chinese toothpaste.

The Dominican Republic removed 10,000 tubes of the toothpaste from store shelves. Panama also removed the toothpaste, and on May 30, police in Nicaragua seized 40,000 tubes while warning that another 50,000 tubes could still be on store shelves. The toothpaste was imported from Costa Rica, which obtained it from Panama.

Earlier in May, dozens of people died in Panama after Taixing Glycol Factory in China—or elsewhere—that may be laced with diethylene glycol as 99.5 percent glycerin for use in human medications. The diethylene glycol falsely stated as toothpaste was sold in the U.S., and the Food and Drug Administration has found diethylene glycol in legally imported Chinese toothpaste.

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