

National Healthy Nail Salon Alliance



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FALSE CLAIMS, HIDDEN TOXIN

Popular hair product, Brazilian Blowout Solution, contains dangerous levels of formaldehyde

LOS ANGELES -- Recently-released results from a state lab have found that two hair straightening treatment products popular with celebrities, the Brazilian Blowout Solution and the Acai Professional Smoothing Solution, by the company Brazilian Blowout, contain dangerously high levels of the suspected carcinogen formaldehyde—at 4.85 percent and 10 percent, respectively.

California-based Brazilian Blowout manufactures the products, which they claim to be “formaldehyde free.” The samples were taken to Oregon Health & Science University for testing after staff at a Portland salon reported difficulty breathing, nose bleeds and eye irritation when using the product as directed. The university’s Center for Research on Occupational Environmental Toxicology sent the samples to Oregon OSHU for lab tests. The material safety data sheet (which should list hazardous chemicals) listed no formaldehyde. If a product contains more than 0.1% formaldehyde, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration requires the manufacturer to list it on the material safety data sheet.

OHSU stated in a press release issued today: “The test results raised concerns at CROET [Center for Research on Occupational and Environmental Toxicology] because of the various long-term and short-term impacts of formaldehyde exposure. According to the Centers for Disease Control, low levels of formaldehyde can cause irritation of the eyes, nose, throat, and skin. It is possible that people with asthma may be even more sensitive to the effects of inhaled formaldehyde. In regards to long term effects, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has determined that formaldehyde may reasonably be anticipated to be a carcinogen,” Dede Montgomery, an Occupational Safety and Health Specialist at CROET who is leading the studies.

“It’s incredibly disturbing that it’s taken salon workers getting sick to expose the fact that popular products contain a suspected carcinogen,” says Erin Switalski of Women’s Voices for the Earth, an environmental health advocacy group and co-founder of the National Healthy Nail Salon Alliance, a national network of health advocates and researchers working for safe salons. “Clearly, the nation’s laws regulating these products are failing workers and consumers alike.”

Women’s Voices for the Earth, the National Healthy Salon Alliance and others have criticized the United States’ system for being ineffective in monitoring the safety of cosmetic products. Under current law, the FDA can’t require cosmetics companies to conduct safety tests, or even require product recalls. As a result, the marketplace is flooded with products that contain toxic chemicals. Workers and consumers are

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forced to rely on industry to self-police, which has not been effective enough. It is unknown at this time whether the Brazilian Blowout products will be recalled.

“Toxic beauty products have long jeopardized the health of salon workers,” says Anuja Mendiratta of the National Healthy Salon Alliance and the California Healthy Nail Salon Collaborative. “We regularly hear stories from women who are exposed to an unimaginable number of chemicals in their workplace and suffer a range of serious health impacts. I hope this is a wake-up call that something seriously wrong with our regulatory system, and we need to fix it at the federal level to assure worker and consumer health and safety.”

For the first time in 70 years, Congress is set to vote on the Safe Cosmetics Act of 2010, which would close the loopholes in the outdated federal law that allows chemicals to cause serious health impacts to salon workers and consumers.

The cost of the Brazilian Blowout treatment varies between \$150 and \$600. The Brazilian Blowout Solution and Acai Professional Smoothing Solution are just two products offered by the California company, and the only ones tested by OHSU. It is unknown whether other products, such as the Brazilian Blowout shampoo, conditioner and masque contain formaldehyde.

Formaldehyde has been classified as a known human carcinogen by the International Agency for Research on Cancer. Research studies of workers exposed to formaldehyde have suggested an association between exposure to the chemical and several cancers, including nasopharyngeal cancer and leukemia (National Cancer Institute). Due to these risks and associated short-term exposure effects, OHSU recommends further discussion and testing of these products to ensure salon workers and consumers are informed and protected.

More information at: <http://www.ohsu.edu/xd/research/centers-institutes/croet/emerging-issues-and-alerts.cfm>

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[Women's Voices for the Earth](#) (WVE) is a national organization that works to eliminate toxic chemicals that impact women's health by changing consumer behaviors, corporate practices, and government policies.

[The National Healthy Salon Alliance](#) is working to raise the profile of salon worker health and safety issues, to connect and leverage the resources of concerned groups (including workers' rights, labor, environmental and reproductive health and justice, and Asian Pacific Islander groups), to advocate that salon product manufacturers reformulate and produce safer products, and to advocate for greater regulatory protection of salon workers. It was founded in 2007 by Women's Voices for the Earth, the California Healthy Nail Salon Collaborative, and the National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum.