



News Release

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STATE HEALTH DEPARTMENT WARNS CONSUMERS NOT TO EAT THREE BRANDS OF LEAD-CONTAMINATED CANDY FROM MEXICO

SACRAMENTO – Consumers, particularly infants, young children and pregnant women, should not eat Lucas Limon, Lucas Limon con Chili and Tama Roca Banderilla candies imported from Mexico after tests by the California Department of Health Services (CDHS) found high levels of lead that could cause serious health problems, State Public Health Officer Dr. Mark Horton warned today.

“Lead is toxic to humans, especially infants, young children and developing fetuses, in both short- and long-term exposures, and can result in learning disabilities and behavioral disorders that could last a lifetime,” Horton said. “Today’s warning is part of our ongoing efforts to ensure the safety of foods sold in California.”

Recent analysis of the three candies by CDHS identified that the candies contained the following amounts of lead:

Lucas Limon	0.20 – 0.43 parts per million (ppm)
Lucas Limon Con Chile	0.38 – 0.48 ppm
Tama Roca Banderilla	0.05 – 0.14 ppm

These candies were the first tested under expanded authority of CDHS under Assembly Bill 121 signed by Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger in 2006. This legislation provided additional resources to CDHS to expand investigative and laboratory staff so more testing of candy can be conducted to ensure these products are not adulterated with lead and other contaminants.

California considers candies with lead levels in excess of 0.1 ppm adulterated. This level is consistent with the guidance issued by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration in November 2006 on the recommended maximum lead level of 0.1 ppm in candy products likely to be consumed by children.

In August 2004, CDHS warned consumers about the levels of lead in several Lucas products, including Lucas Limon. These products are packaged in small plastic salt shakers with bright-colored labels. Effem Mexico Inc., the manufacturer of these products, withdrew the products from sale in 2004 and discontinued the manufacturing of the products at that time.

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Despite CDHS' warning, these candies were recently found at Marquez Brothers Inc, an importer/distributor in San Jose, Calif., during recent sampling efforts and may still be available at retail locations. The two Lucas products had been bundled and overwrapped with a label stating, "El Mexicano Lucas Limon" and "El Mexicano Baby Lucas" (Lucas Limon con Chile). Each package contains three plastic salt shakers that are individually labeled as Lucas Limon (green label) and Lucas Limon con Chile (red label), respectively. The products sampled and analyzed listed lot codes that confirmed the products were manufactured in 2004 prior to the CDHS warning. Marquez Brothers has initiated a voluntary recall of this product and is working with CDHS to ensure that all products still in commerce are promptly removed.

Tama Roca Banderilla is a spicy and salty tamarind pulp candy. The candies are bundled in different size packages that contain individually wrapped candies. The candy packages are bright yellow in color with the word "Banderilla" boldly printed in green letters and "Tama Roca" boldly printed in white lettering with red trim along the length of the package.

Pregnant women and parents of children who may have consumed any of the above mentioned candies should consult with their physician or health care provider to determine if further medical testing is warranted. For more information about lead poisoning, parents and caretakers should contact their local childhood lead poisoning prevention program or local public health department. Additional information and a list of local childhood lead prevention programs are available at CDHS' Web site at <http://www.dhs.ca.gov/childlead/>.

Consumers in possession of any of the above candies should dispose of the product. The public is encouraged to report any sellers of the candy by calling CDHS' Complaint Hotline at 1-800-495-3232. Results of this round of candy testing will be posted on the CDHS Food and Drug Branch Web site at www.dhs.ca.gov/fdb in the next several days.

Photos of these candies are available upon request.