

Thimerosal is recognized as a reproductive toxicant in the state of California

Outlined below is a review by the California Environment Protection Agency regarding the use of thimerosal as it relates to Proposition 65 in California. Proposition 65, officially known as the [Safe Drinking Water and Toxic Enforcement Act of 1986](#), was enacted in November 1986. The proposition protects the state's drinking water sources from being contaminated with chemicals known to cause cancer, birth defects or other reproductive harm, and requires businesses to inform Californians about exposures to such chemicals. Proposition 65 requires the state to maintain and update [a list of chemicals known to the state to cause cancer or reproductive toxicity](#).

On October 15, 2003, a petition on behalf of Bayer Corporation “for reconsideration of the determination that a 1984 EPA report formally identified ‘mercury and mercury compounds’ as reproductive toxins and clarification of the listing” (“Petition”) was filed with the Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA) by Norman C. Hile of Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe, LLP. The Petition specifically seeks “to discern whether OEHHA interprets the ‘mercury and mercury compounds’ listing to encompass thimerosal and PMA [phenylmercuric acetate].” Bayer requests that if OEHHA interprets the “mercury and mercury compounds” listing under Proposition 65 to encompass thimerosal or PMA, the listing should be reconsidered.

RESPONSE TO THE PETITION OF BAYER CORPORATION FOR CLARIFICATION OF THE PROPOSITION 65 LISTING OF “MERCURY AND MERCURY COMPOUNDS” AS CHEMICALS KNOWN TO CAUSE REPRODUCTIVE TOXICITY CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY OFFICE OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH HAZARD ASSESSMENT

The agency responded that Thimerosal and PMA have been included on the Proposition 65 list since 1990 when the listing for mercury and mercury compounds was made, because each is a mercury compound. Based upon our review of the documents supporting the listing of mercury and mercury compounds, OEHHA finds that neither of the reconsideration criteria is met for thimerosal or PMA. With regard to the first criterion, the scientific evidence that PMA and thimerosal cause reproductive toxicity is clear and voluminous. Thimerosal dissociates in the body to ethyl mercury. The evidence for its reproductive toxicity includes severe mental retardation or malformations in human offspring who were poisoned when their mothers were exposed to ethyl mercury or thimerosal while pregnant, studies in animals demonstrating developmental toxicity after exposure to either ethyl mercury or thimerosal, and data showing interconversion to other forms of mercury that also clearly cause reproductive toxicity.

Click [here](#) for the full report.