



Recycled Paperboard Technical Association®

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Dear RPTA Member Customers,

The purpose of this letter is to provide additional information regarding the Recycled Paperboard Technical Association's (RPTA's) "Food Packaging Safety Guidance and Chemical Testing Protocol" (Protocol) and its relationship to the mineral oil hydrocarbons that have been raised as a potential concern in a recent European study.

RPTA's Protocol was developed through the ongoing collaboration of industry, legal and scientific experts for the purpose of advising RPTA members on how to evaluate their products for compliance with the Federal Food, Drug & Cosmetic Act (FD&C Act) and all applicable food additive regulations. The Protocol was first published in 1998 but has been updated four times since then with the most recent version published in 2007. We are working on a new edition that we expect to publish in 2012.

The Protocol and its auxiliary documents serve as the basis for a comprehensive program for RPTA members to use to determine the suitability of their products for various food packaging applications. The overall program includes guidance for source control, good manufacturing practices, recordkeeping, regular testing and overall suitable purity. With regard to testing and suitable purity, the first edition of the Protocol included a list of more than 150 substances to be considered including heavy metals, pesticides, phthalates, polyaromatic hydrocarbons (PAH's), polychlorinated biphenyl's (PCB's), and volatile and semi-volatile organic compounds. The program has been updated periodically as new information warrants.

The recent European study found low levels (0.7 to 28 parts per million) of aromatic or saturated mineral oil hydrocarbons (mineral oil impurities) in some European dry food samples, as well as in the samples' packaging. European authorities are evaluating the situation to determine the origin of the mineral oil impurities and whether the impurities present a health concern.

As FDA recently stated, mineral oil can be used in food and in food-contact materials provided it is of an appropriate grade for its intended use.¹ Food and food packaging grades of mineral oil may be suitable if the impurities, such as the aromatic fractions that are of concern in the EU situation, are sufficiently controlled.² RPTA's Protocol includes testing for specific PAH's which represent unintended aromatic impurities. Although specific test data is confidential to each member, the aggregated data that we have reviewed provides a strong basis for us to believe that the products that RPTA member companies supply are in full compliance with the FD&C Act and all applicable food additive regulations for their intended use. (Consult individual member companies for assurance regarding the suitability of specific products for the applications in which they will be used.)

We hope the foregoing provides helpful information regarding the relationship between the RPTA Protocol and the mineral oil hydrocarbons identified in the European study. Please let us know if you would like any further information.

Sincerely,

Deborah White

Deborah White
Executive Director
Recycled Paperboard Technical Association

¹ "EU paper industry calls for caution on mineral oil risk," Food Chemical News Week in Review, pg. 15 (March 18, 2011) ("Mineral oils (odorless light petroleum hydrocarbons) can be used in foods and food-contact materials provided they are of appropriate food grade for use thoses. An example of food grade specifications for mineral oils would be those listed in the Food Chemicals Codex. One result of meeting such specifications would be to limit the aromatic fraction which can be present in mineral oil. It is that fraction which is of particular concern regarding the European products.")

² Mineral oil that meets purity specifications (including for aromatic fractions which are controlled through ultraviolet (UV) absorbance limits) is permitted for a wide variety of uses in FDA's food additive regulations. See, e.g., 21 CFR 172.878 (mineral oil permitted for direct addition to specified dry foods as dust control agent; mineral oil permitted for use at up to 0.15% in bakery products as release agent); 21 CFR 178.3620 (mineral oil that meets UV absorbance limits and other specifications permitted for use in food packaging applications).