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CARING FOR NEW MEXICO

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For Immediate Release:
September 2, 2011

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New Mexico Departments of Health and Environment Warn of Mercury Poisoning Linked to Beauty Cream

The New Mexico Department of Health and the New Mexico Environment Department have learned of confirmed cases of mercury poisoning in South Texas that are linked to the use of Crema Aguamary, a cosmetic produced in Mexico and not approved for use in the United States.

Medical providers in South Texas have reported at least 18 patients who tested positive for elevated levels of mercury in their blood. The Texas Department of State Health Services has tested 16 samples of Crema Aguamary obtained from individuals using the product and all samples contain levels of mercury hundreds of thousands of times higher than permitted in the United States. These samples of Crema Aguamary contained mercury levels ranging from 56,000 to 131,000 parts per million (ppm), and samples of cream labeled for use around the eyes tested from 240 to 6,700 ppm of mercury. The FDA only allows trace amounts of mercury less than 1 ppm in cosmetics.

“It is important for New Mexicans to be aware of these toxic products and the possibility that they are being sold or used here, in the United States,” said Cabinet Secretary for the Department of Health, Dr. Catherine Torres. “People should not use or purchase these products. If you have any Crema Aguamary, please contact your local Environment Department Office for disposal.”

While it is not clear that these products are being sold in New Mexico, investigators in Texas believe that individuals are purchasing the products in Mexico and bringing them across the border. These products can also be purchased online.

High exposures to the type of mercury found in these products can cause damage to the nervous system and kidneys. Symptoms may include extreme fatigue, muscle aches and weakness, skin rashes, sores in the mouth, mood changes, memory loss, high blood pressure, and weight loss. Products containing mercury are a particular concern for pregnant women and nursing mothers because mercury can be passed on to children.

People who believe they may have been exposed to mercury through Crema Aguamary products should contact their healthcare provider or the New Mexico Poison and Drug Information Center at 1-800-222-1222.

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