



Press Release

California Environmental Protection Agency
Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment
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Proposed OEHHA regulation clarifies that cancer warnings are not required for coffee under Proposition 65

SACRAMENTO – The California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA) today proposed a new regulation clarifying that cancer warnings are not required for coffee under Proposition 65, the state’s toxics right-to-know law.

The proposed regulation states that drinking coffee does not pose a significant cancer risk, despite the presence of chemicals created during the roasting and brewing process that are listed under Proposition 65 as known carcinogens.

The proposed regulation is based on extensive scientific evidence that drinking coffee has not been shown to increase the risk of cancer and may reduce the risk of some types of cancer.

In a review of more than 1,000 studies published this week, the World Health Organization’s International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) concluded that there is “inadequate evidence” that drinking coffee causes cancer. IARC found that coffee is associated with reduced risk for cancers of the liver and uterus, and does not cause cancers of the breast, pancreas and prostate. IARC also found that coffee drinking exhibits strong antioxidant effects related to reduced cancer risk.

Coffee is a complex mixture of numerous chemicals that includes both known carcinogens – such as acrylamide, formed during the roasting of coffee beans and brewing coffee – and chemicals that protect against cancer, including antioxidants.

Proposition 65, approved by California voters in 1986, is a right-to-know law that requires businesses to provide clear and reasonable warnings when they knowingly cause exposures to chemicals that the state has listed as causing cancer or reproductive effects. The law has prompted the reduction or elimination of lead, arsenic and other toxic chemicals in a variety of products.

However, the statute does not require cancer warnings when exposure to listed chemicals does not cause a significant cancer risk.

While the proposed regulation would largely exempt coffee from Proposition 65 cancer warnings, it does not address exposures to listed chemicals that may occur if the chemicals are intentionally added to the coffee mixture or enter the mixture as contaminants in some way other than the process of roasting and brewing.

The posting of the proposed regulation initiates a public comment period that will run until August 30. In addition, OEHHA will hold a public hearing on the proposed regulation on August 16 at 10 am at the California Environmental Protection Agency Administration Building, 1001 I Street, Sacramento.

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