



Physicians Caring for Texans

March 15, 2011

Rep. Eddie Rodriguez  
Texas House of Representatives  
PO Box 2910  
Austin, TX 78768

Dear Representative Rodriguez:

Re: HB 437 by Representative Rodriguez

The Texas Medical Association supports prevention efforts to reduce unintended injuries among children. Thank you for your efforts aimed at protecting Texas children when it comes to exposure to the toxic substance ethylene glycol and for your efforts in highlighting this important issue.

Unintentional poisoning is a serious concern for people of all ages, but especially children. Each day, nearly 82 people die in the United States as a result of unintentional poisoning, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. More than half of all poisoning reports occur among children younger than 6 years, according to the American Association of Poison Control Centers (AAPCC). In 2009, AAPCC tallied 485 reports of ethylene glycol exposures to kids under 6 in the United States.

While some of the most common poisonous items affecting children include cosmetics, cleaning products, and pain medicines, antifreeze is considered one of the most dangerous poisons found in a home.

The American Medical Association and our physicians believe it is important to have a comprehensive strategy to protect children from poisonous substances. Private industries must label and package household chemicals to inform parents and deter children. Individuals also must be able to depend on the expertise and 24-hour availability of an accredited poison control system. In addition, parents, children, physicians, and other health care professionals who respond to poison emergencies must receive the appropriate education.

The addition of aversive agents to products such as antifreeze to prevent poisonings is also an important step. These agents, however, cannot replace any other poison prevention strategy. The additives should work in conjunction with other components of a comprehensive approach to poison prevention. We must look to future research activities to further understand best practices in evidence-based prevention and treatment.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment, and thank you for highlighting the issue of poison control.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey Levin, MD, MSPH  
Chair, Council on Science and Public Health