



DRS/MtH/IEA.52

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DRS Information Exchange Service**ALERT No. 52****DIETHYLENE GLYCOL POISONING IN HAITI : UPDATE – CONTAMINATED GLYCEROL (GLYCERIN) USED IN PARACETAMOL SYRUP**

Further to Alert No. 50 of 28 June 1996, the World Health Organization has been informed that the outbreak of diethylene glycol poisoning that occurred in Haiti from November 1995 to June 1996 was due to glycerol (glycerin) contaminated with diethylene glycol used in the preparation of paracetamol syrup. The contaminated glycerol was imported into Haiti from another country. The incident led to some 75 deaths of children from kidney failure.

Glycerol is widely used in pharmaceutical preparations for various functions, for example, as an antimicrobial preservative, emollient, humectant, plasticizer, solvent and tonicity agent. In oral solutions, such as syrups, glycerol is used as a sweetening agent. Complexities in the distribution procedure of glycerol and other pharmaceutical raw materials result in the involvement of many handlers (importers and exporters)..

The outbreak in Haiti emphasizes the need for pharmaceutical producers worldwide to be aware of possible contamination of glycerol and other raw materials with diethylene glycol and to use appropriate quality control measures to identify and prevent potential contamination.

Reference: *MMWR Report*, Vol. 45, No.30 dated 2 August 1996.

