



What's the story on printing inks?

Industry well ahead on toxic laws

Canada's paper-based packaging industry already meets the most stringent toxic (heavy metal) legislation in North America.

The Paper & Paperboard Packaging Environmental Council (PPEC) acted on this issue way back in 1993, releasing the results of the survey of its 116-company membership.

"Not all of them use printing inks," says PPEC executive director John Mullinder, "but of the ones which do, none intentionally use any lead, mercury, cadmium and hexavalent chromium-based ingredients — the so-called 'baddies.' That's the good news for people concerned about heavy metals seeping into groundwater."

The council had taken a proactive response to the issue, he said, because of moves in the United States to eliminate the use of heavy metals in packaging and packaging components, and to limit the total amount of incidentally present toxics.

These efforts have been spearheaded by a Coalition of nine Northeastern Governors, industry and public-interest groups (CONEG). Eleven states have so far adopted the CONEG legislation.

This demands that the sum or incidental concentration levels of lead, mercury, cadmium and hexavalent chromium be less than 100 parts per million by weight within four years of the legislation being introduced.

"That we already meet these low levels without being regulated indicates to me," says Mullinder, "just how proactive the paper converting industry and its ink suppliers have been in meeting this environmental challenge head on."