



State of California—Health and Human Services Agency  
Department of Health Services



SANDRA SHEWRY  
Director

ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER  
Governor

May 15, 2006

Employer  
XXXXXXXXXX  
XXXXXXXXXX  
XXXXXXXXXX

**Subject:** Two Cases of Bronchiolitis Obliterans (Life-Threatening Lung Disease) Among California Flavoring Manufacturing Workers

Dear Employer:

The Occupational Health Branch (OHB), a non-regulatory program in the California Department of Health Services, is alerting you to two cases of bronchiolitis obliterans, a life-threatening lung disease among workers at food flavoring companies in California. This disease has been linked to exposure to diacetyl, a butter flavoring ingredient<sup>1</sup>. To help you identify and protect workers at your facility who may be at risk for this serious disease, we recommend the following:

**Determine if diacetyl and other butter flavoring chemicals are used** at your facility. Check the Hazardous Ingredients section of Material Safety Data Sheets and consult suppliers and manufacturers if you are not sure. Diacetyl can be identified on MSDSs by the CAS number 431-03-8.

**Provide spirometry tests (lung function tests) through a local medical provider** for all workers who may be exposed to diacetyl and other butter flavoring chemicals. This should be done as soon as possible, and on a periodic basis, as early detection is critical and affected workers may not have symptoms. Resource information is enclosed.

**Limit worker exposures** by substituting less hazardous chemicals, enclosing open processes, using local exhaust ventilation, and providing respiratory protection consistent with the Cal/OSHA Respiratory Protection Standard ([www.dir.ca.gov/title8/5144.html](http://www.dir.ca.gov/title8/5144.html)).

**Train workers on the health hazards of diacetyl and other chemicals**, how to protect against exposure, and how to recognize and report symptoms. This training is required by the Cal/OSHA Hazard Communication Standard ([www.ca.gov/title8/5194.html](http://www.ca.gov/title8/5194.html)) and Injury and Illness Prevention Standard ([www.ca.gov/title8/3203.html](http://www.ca.gov/title8/3203.html)). The enclosed fact sheets may be useful training aids.

**Assess hazards** to ensure minimal exposure to diacetyl. Safe exposure levels have not been established.

Please contact OHB at (866) 282-5516 if you have questions or if we can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

Barbara Materna, Ph.D., CIH, Chief, Occupational Health Branch

<sup>1</sup> See the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) website at <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/fluorings/> and the Flavor and Extract Manufacturers Association of the United States (FEMA) report at <http://www.femaflavor.org/html/public/RespiratoryRpt.pdf> for more information.

**OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH BRANCH**

850 Marina Bay Parkway, Building P, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
Richmond, CA 94804

Tel: (510)620-5757 Fax: (510)620-5743 [www.dhs.ca.gov/ohb](http://www.dhs.ca.gov/ohb)