



Make TBO Your Home Page | Subscribe / Manage Acct. | Advertise With Us | Contact Us | Login | Edit Profile | Register

Cyber Week Deals In Kitchen



amazon Shop Amazon.com

NEWS WEATHER COMMUNITY ENTERTAINMENT SPORTS LIFESTYLES TOOLS Jobs Autos Homes Deals Shopping|Classifieds Services

ALL | KEYWORDS | NEWS | SHOP | PHOTO | EVENTS | VIDEO | AUDIO | WEB | MORE Web Search powered by YAHOO! SEARCH

Search: Enter Search Term or Keyword

Friday, December 3, 2010 Tampa 65.0° Fair



TBO > LIFE

Share Print Email Text Size

Recommend

53 people recommend this. Be the first of your friends.

Refunds offered on reusable grocery bags containing lead

Staff photos by CLIFF McBRIDE



Bags from Winn-Dixie, left, and Publix were found to contain lead.

ADVERTISEMENT

\$125 for a Keratin Treatment from Hair Potions at Sola Salon (\$350 Value)

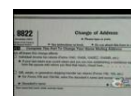
Together for Care TelethonSM
Alzheimer's Foundation of America

MARK YOUR CALENDAR FOR THIS AMAZING TV EVENT!

DONATE. GET INVOLVED. [learn more](#)

NBC LOCAL MEDIA | Eisai Platinum Sponsor | alzfdn.org

Video Highlights



IRS Money
Video | Fri, 7 Feb 2020
refunds found at 0:20

"...15000. Americans never receive their tax **refunds** last year. In Florida more than 10000 people...



Dissatisfied NBA fans
Video | Mon, 25 Oct 2010



How to get refunds for canceled game
Video | Sat, 23 Oct 2010

[More Highlights >](#)

ADVERTISEMENT

TBO.com **DAILY DEAL**

SIGN UP FOR THE DAILY EMAIL

Virgin America

SFO TO CANCUN
FROM ONLY **\$169**

RESTRICTIONS, TAXES, AND FEES APPLY. SERVICE TO CANCUN.

By **RICHARD MULLINS** | The Tampa Tribune

Published: November 14, 2010
Updated: 11/14/2010 08:42 am

1 vote

TAMPA - Grocery chain Winn-Dixie sells a reusable grocery bag with two sturdy handles, pictures of cute baby faces and enough toxic lead to alarm

health experts.

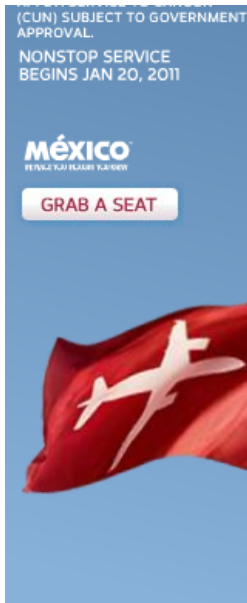
The bag contains enough lead that Hillsborough County could consider the bag hazardous if thrown out with household trash, according to independent laboratory tests commissioned by The Tampa Tribune.

It's not just Winn-Dixie.

Tribune tests also showed some Publix reusable bags had lead levels that exceed federal limits for paint and exceeded rules coming soon for

RELATED LINKS

- See the test results
- How the bags were tested
- The options for shoppers
- Poll: What are you going to do?
- Gallery: see the bags
- Schumer wants federal review



children's toys. Though the bags comply with other limits, Publix, in a cautionary move, asked its bag suppliers to lower lead content in bags. That decision came after officials were told the results of the Tribune tests.

Winn-Dixie officials said they have an "opportunity to improve" after Tribune tests showed bags exceeded federal limits for paint. This presents a dilemma for shoppers who avoid paper or plastic for environmental reasons. Lead is linked to learning disabilities in children and fertility problems in adults. The answer for shoppers appears to be: Not all bags are created equal, the lab tests showed.

The more elaborate the illustrations on the bags, the more likely they contained toxins. Yellow and green paint on bags is a common carrier of lead.

"For me, personally, I would balk at buying these types of bags," said Hugh Rodrigues, owner of Thornton Laboratories, which tested 13 bags for the Tribune. "I'd choose paper bags."

Those can be recycled easily, he said.

The Tampa Tribune purchased two-dozen reusable bags from the largest grocery companies in the Bay area this fall and paid for two rounds of tests at Thornton Laboratories in Tampa, which regularly tests food and chemicals for industrial clients, and has tested children's jewelry for the Tribune.

Some health advocates say there is no safe level for lead, calling it a toxin at any level.

Florida has no clear regulation focused on lead in bags, so lab officials and health advocates point to a conflicting series of government rules regarding consumer products.

Currently, the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission allows 300 parts per million of lead in children's products. In August, that level will fall to 100. And any paint on consumer products can contain no more than 90 parts per million.

The packaging industry is pushing for a limit of 100 parts per million, and it helped enact laws in 19 states to limit lead. Florida has not signed on, said Patty Dillon, a spokeswoman for the Toxics in Packaging Clearinghouse.

In the first round of tests, the Baby Faces bag from Winn-Dixie showed the highest levels of lead, 121 parts per million, and showed 117 in the second.

A bag from Publix with a University of South Florida theme approached the 100 parts per million threshold, with a level of 87 parts per million in the first tests, and showed 194 parts per million in a second test — the highest result of any bag in Tribune tests.

The differences between the two tests likely came from different production runs at the manufacturer, Rodrigues said.

The lead appears to be in a form that is not easily extracted or leached, Rodrigues said. It is not in a form that would rub off on food simply by touching the bag, like wet paint, he said, but over time, bags wear down and paint can flake off and threads can fray, releasing the lead.

Environmental Protection Agency rules require that any product with a lead content higher than 100 parts per million should technically undergo further testing before landfills accept them for disposal, he said.

Publix officials stress that their bags are not toys or paint, and thus comply with current federal rules. But after reviewing the Tribune test results last week, Publix officials said they took action.

"We have already contacted the supplier of this bag and asked them to look at reducing the lead content, even though it is within government safety standards," said spokeswoman Shannon Patten. "We would never knowingly carry something in our stores that wasn't in compliance with


- [Busch Gardens Tampa Bay is losing 125 jobs](#)
- [Sheriff: Vengeful gunman in Ruskin shot wrong people](#)
- [2nd man accused of having sex with Pasco girl, 14](#)
- [Busch Gardens Tampa Bay is losing 125 jobs](#)
- [Brides unhappy with Safety Harbor wedding photographer](#)

- [Got a tip on a fire? Report it online](#)
- [Bucs agree to disagree on key pass interference call](#)
- [Outback founder involved in Clearwater wine bar](#)
- [Zoo Atlanta's baby panda makes his debut](#)
- [Acorn deluge makes a mess, delights squirrels](#)

- [Sheriff: Vengeful gunman in Ruskin shot wrong people](#)
- [Ex-Outback analyst gets prison in embezzlement scheme](#)
- [Outback founder involved in Clearwater wine bar](#)
- [Tampa wants alcohol in Curtis Hixon park](#)
- [Large pot plants discovered in Wesley Chapel grow house](#)

ADVERTISEMENT

Product	<input type="text"/>
Category	<input type="text" value="All"/>
Store	<input type="text" value="All"/>
<input type="submit" value="Submit"/>	

 Tampa Bay Buccaneers 50-count golf tees only \$9.95! [Details](#)

government regulations, and we work hard every day to bring safe, high-quality products to our customers."

Publix will refund the purchase price of bags to any concerned shopper, she said. Winn-Dixie also said it would refund the cost of a bag. Lead in bags may have emerged as the surprise issue of the year for grocers and consumers.

Shoppers have been switching to reusable totes, avoiding plastic bags to help the environment and lessen the nation's dependence on oil used to make the plastic. Some states want to ban inexpensive plastic bags or impose a tax to discourage their use. Reusable bags seemed the natural solution.

Fitting the Reduce, Reuse, Recycle mantra, reusable bags have become popular, even fashionable, with elaborate designs, holiday themes and sports team logos. Publix has sold 13 million reusable bags, saving an estimated 1 million plastic bags a day.

However, this summer, an independent group tested bags from the upscale Wegmans grocery company and found some contained lead at 799 parts per million, well beyond levels that health officials consider problematic.

Wegmans commissioned its own tests, which also found lead, and immediately stopped selling two styles of bags, one with a green pea design and one with a holiday illustration. (No other designs were affected.) Wegmans posted signs in stores telling customers the bags were safe to use, but should be returned to the store before disposal.

"Lead is a neurotoxin, a carcinogen and affects children's IQ," said Judy Braiman of Rochesterians Against the Misuse of Pesticides, the first outside group to test Wegmans bags. "It's ironic that everyone is really trying to be good for the environment, and then these bags have lead all over the place."

Winn-Dixie officials reviewed the Tribune results and said they were confident their bags were "safe to use and reuse as intended." That said, the Tribune test "suggests there is an opportunity to improve this solution as it pertains to disposal of these bags, and ensure the ongoing benefits to our customers and the communities we serve."

For those hoping to help the environment, perhaps a more important issue is what to do with bags when they wear out. Among rules for disposal, bags fall into a gray area.

The rules are clear with things such as tube televisions and paint. They are considered hazardous waste, and residents must bring them to the government for special handling.

But there are no requirements for bags, said James Ransom, a spokesman for Hillsborough County's solid waste program.

But Ransom said the basic chemical content of these bags tested by the Tribune would require special handling under Hillsborough County rules, and he advises consumers who know about issues with their bags to handle them differently than general household trash.

Florida has come a long way from the days when local governments dug holes, dumped trash and set it on fire, said Richard Tedder, a program administrator for the state Department of Environmental Protection. He said he thinks the bags would be fine in landfills, especially the more modern dumps with liners to prevent groundwater contamination.

However, Rodrigues, Braiman and Dillon said there is a multiplying effect of millions of Americans buying reusable bags and tossing them out over time.

All this presents problems for shoppers.

Reusable bags don't list lead as an ingredient in the material. All the bags tested by the Tribune were made in China. A tag on the USF bag from Publix says to hand wash separately and line dry.

 Save \$20 on 100¢ off with coupons at Publix Mart through Sunday! [Details](#)

 Save \$196 on a Mikasa Italian Countryside 12-pc buffet set - only \$50! Was \$246! [Details](#)

More TBO Holiday Deals

Shoppers could try using the home lead tests sold in stores, but those are primarily designed for testing paint on hard surfaces such as walls or toys.

The bags tested by the Tribune with the highest lead levels tended to have the most elaborate designs or illustrations that covered the entire surface.

By contrast, a nylon bag sold by Target with almost no illustrations had almost undetectable levels of lead. Also, the simplest bags from Sweetbay, Walmart and Publix contained little lead.

For shoppers, the best advice might be: If you're concerned about your bags, take them back to the store.

Share this:



Email



Facebook



Twitter



MySpace

Reader Comments

Voice your opinion by posting a comment.

1 2 3 > Last Page: 3

Posted by (jrojas) on 11/14/2010 at 08:53 am.

I say just don't eat the bags. Lead is in the paint of your older homes...at levels even the Chinese would envy. Do we knock them all down? No. When does common sense kick in? Apparently when the lawyer enrichment funds are depleted...

[Report Inappropriate Comments](#)

Posted by (jrojas) on 11/14/2010 at 09:06 am.

There is countless tons of lead in our local waters right at this moment. Remember all those lead sinkers on fishing lines. What do you think happens to all the sinkers that gets lost out there? It's doesn't just dissolve.

All those old ships that were sunk that where caked with lead paint...lead weights, asbestos, lead this, lead that...Yet we eat the very fish that swim in these polluted waters. What happened to consumer safety then?

The earth can clean itself, but it requires millions of years. The human race needs to pack up and make room for the next dominant species of this planet. We had our chance. It's too bad we are a doomed, self destructive species.

[Report Inappropriate Comments](#)

Posted by (nickatdabeach) on 11/14/2010 at 09:11 am.

looks like the defeated global warming shysters have found their newest campaign

[Report Inappropriate Comments](#)

Posted by (reptaddict) on 11/14/2010 at 09:13 am.

Lead in reusable grocery bags! Oh no! Doomed! We are doomed I say! Next.

[Report Inappropriate Comments](#)

Posted by (Secondrowbucsfan) on 11/14/2010 at 09:27 am.

(This comment was removed by the site staff.)

[Report Inappropriate Comments](#)

Posted by (LutzNutz) on 11/14/2010 at 09:31 am.

ok, so three bags turned up with high levels, but only two of those where consistently above federal levels. The simplest bags have less lead in them that what's probably in the air we breathe.

this is such a non-story. I can't say it was designed to scare people, because it's just not that scary.

[Report Inappropriate Comments](#)

Posted by (lukelarve) on 11/14/2010 at 09:44 am.

My wife has been carrying our little newborn baby, Igor, around in these bags for about 6 months now. Hope he will be ok.

[Report Inappropriate Comments](#)

Posted by (mishymale) on 11/14/2010 at 10:04 am.

lukelarve i saw your little one the other day looks cute with that third eye,have you ever thought of trying super glue for that ear that keeps falling off.

[Report Inappropriate Comments](#)

Posted by (commonsensical) on 11/14/2010 at 10:04 am.

The bacteria counts are probably worse for you than the lead content. I would only put dry goods in these reuseable bags; and use the store's plastic ones for meats and dairy. And, if people would put their meats and milk into the available produce bags before putting them in the carts, it would keep carts and conveyor belts much nicer for the next shopper.

[Report Inappropriate Comments](#)

Posted by (ycjcyad) on 11/14/2010 at 10:56 am.

Well since these bags are made in China, they had to do something with all that lead once we stopped them from putting in the drywall.

[Report Inappropriate Comments](#)

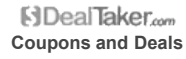
[1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [>](#) [Last Page: 3](#)

Please sign in to leave comments.

(Register for an account.)

Username:

Password: (Lost your password?)



Advergaming and Branded Media

TBO.com - Tampa Bay Online ©2010 Media General Communications Holdings, LLC. A Media General company. Member Agreement | Privacy Statement | Work With Us

TBO.com: [Feedback](#) | [Advertise With Us](#) | [Email Alerts](#) | [SMS/Text Alerts](#) | [Make Us Your Home Page](#) | [Member Center](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Site Map](#) | [Media General Operations Credit Terms and Conditions](#)

WFLA: See news developing? [Email](#) or call our Tipline at 1-800-348-WFLA | [8 on Your Side](#) | [8's Army](#) | [Links We Mentioned](#) | [EEO Public Filings](#) | [Children's Programming](#) | [FCC Form 388](#)

The Tampa Tribune: [Subscribe](#) | [Place an Ad](#) | [Electronic Edition](#) | [Photo Reprints](#) | [Public Research](#) | [Archive](#) | [Corrections](#)