

# Letters to Kellogg's and Supermarkets Regarding Mercury-containing Toys in Cereal Boxes

Carlos M. Gutierrez  
Chairman and Chief Executive Officer  
Kellogg Company

Dear Chairman Gutierrez:

I write to express our concern over the Kellogg's Company's decision to put Spiderman toys with mercury batteries in boxes of children's cereals.



As you should know, mercury is toxic even in small amounts, and poses a significant health and environmental hazard. The Natural Resources Council of Maine calls on Kellogg's to discontinue the sale and distribution of all cereal boxes that contain a mercury battery. We further urge you to stop manufacturing these novelties until the mercury can be replaced and create a program to take back the mercury batteries distributed to date.

It is hard to understand how your company reached the decision to manufacture and distribute millions of "Spidey-Signal" toys with mercury. Some of your people not only knew mercury was in the batteries but also know that mercury is a hazard. The box itself warns kids that there is mercury in the battery. Curiously the legend on the cereal box urges kids to "dispose of [the battery] properly." Apparently, Kellogg's failed to look into exactly what the words on your box mean. To the best of our knowledge, there is no place in America to safely dispose of the button cell batteries so that the mercury will not end up in the environment. Even assuming the battery casing keeps mercury from escaping while in the box of cereal and the child's home, the mercury in the batteries is destined to add to environmental loading.

Mercury is a serious developmental toxin. Relatively small exposure to methylmercury causes brain and nerve damage. In the human population, developing fetuses and young children are most at risk. Mercury exposure impairs the ability of children to pay attention, remember, talk, run and play. Due to unsafe mercury levels, Maine and more than 40 other states maintain strict fish consumption advisories for most fresh water fish and some seafood. Since you are in the food industry, it is hard to understand why Kellogg's would want to add to the mercury pollution problem.

In the interest of protecting kids, water and wildlife, please discontinue all sales of cereal with mercury containing toys and arrange to take back the mercury distributed to date.

Thank you in advance for your consideration and response to this request.

Jon Hinck, Staff Attorney

---

John Raymond  
Category Manager  
Hannaford Bros. Co.

Dear Mr. Raymond:

I write to express concern over mercury in boxes of Rice Krispies and other children's cereals. The Natural Resources Council of Maine calls on Hannaford Brothers to pull off its shelves all cereal boxes that contain a Spiderman toy with mercury batteries.

The "Spidey-Signal" toy is a new promotion in boxes of Kellogg's cereal specifically marketed to kids. As the box itself makes clear, the toy has batteries containing mercury. Though the box also warns kids about the batteries and urges them to "dispose of properly" there currently is no place to send this type of button cell battery for safe disposal. Even assuming the battery casing keeps mercury from escaping while in the box of cereal and the child's home, the mercury in the batteries is destined to increase environmental pollution. We do not need more mercury in Maine and kids' breakfasts should not contribute to this unfortunate problem.

As you may know, mercury is a serious developmental toxin. Relatively small exposure to methylmercury causes brain and nerve damage. In the human population, developing fetuses and young children are most at risk. Mercury exposure impairs the ability of children to pay attention, remember, talk, run and play. Due to unsafe mercury levels, Maine's Bureau of Health maintains strict fish consumption advisories for most of the fresh water fish found in all of Maine's lakes, rivers and streams.

In the interest of protecting Maine's kids, as well as our water bodies and wildlife, we urge you to discontinue all sales of cereal with mercury containing toys.

Thank you in advance for your consideration and response to this request.

Jon Hinck, Staff Attorney

---

Patricia Clark  
Category Manager  
Shaw's Supermarkets

Dear Ms. Clark:

I write to express concern over mercury in boxes of Rice Krispies and other children's cereals. The Natural Resources Council of Maine calls on Shaw's Supermarkets to pull off its shelves all cereal boxes that contain a Spiderman toy with mercury batteries.

The "Spidey-Signal" toy is a new promotion in boxes of Kellogg's cereal specifically marketed to kids. As the box itself makes clear, the toy has batteries containing

mercury. Though the box also warns kids about the batteries and urges them to “dispose of properly” there currently is no place to send this type of button cell battery for safe disposal. Even assuming the battery casing keeps mercury from escaping while in the box of cereal and the child’s home, the mercury in the batteries is destined to increase environmental pollution. We do not need more mercury in Maine and kids’ breakfasts should not contribute to this unfortunate problem.

As you may know, mercury is a serious developmental toxin. Relatively small exposure to methylmercury causes brain and nerve damage. In the human population, developing fetuses and young children are most at risk. Mercury exposure impairs the ability of children to pay attention, remember, talk, run and play. Due to unsafe mercury levels, Maine’s Bureau of Health maintains strict fish consumption advisories for most of the fresh water fish found in all of Maine's lakes, rivers and streams.

In the interest of protecting Maine’s kids, as well as our water bodies and wildlife, we urge you to discontinue all sales of cereal with mercury containing toys.

Thank you in advance for your consideration and response to this request.

Jon Hinck, Staff Attorney