

Evaluation of biocidal product enquiries to the Austrian Poisons Information Centre 2015

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Objective

A biocidal product is any substance or mixture intending to destroy, deter, render harmless, prevent the action of, or exert a controlling effect on any harmful organism by any means other than mere physical or mechanical action. Biocidal products are divided into 4 main groups: disinfectants, preservatives, pest control and other biocidal products. The European Union has set up strict rules and procedures to ensure a high level of protection for human health, animal health and the environment.

Methods

On behalf of the and funded by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Sustainability and Tourism (formerly known as Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management) the local Poisons Information Centre (PIC) retrospectively evaluated enquiries regarding exposures to biocidal products in 2015.

Results

The PIC of Austria received in total 25718 telephone inquiries in the year 2015. Regarding biocidal product exposure the PIC was contacted in **643 cases**:

341 (53%) were under the age of 15, 302 (47%) over 15 years of age.

Most of the persons were exposed accidentally, predominantly by ingestion, only 11 cases were suicidal attempts.

In 32 cases the exposures occurred in the workplace, where the products were inhaled (n=17). In other cases they were taken orally (n=7) or the patients' eyes (n=6) were affected, in one case there was a dermal and in one case there was a combined exposure (inhalative and oral).

In 542 cases a poisoning could be excluded due to minor exposure. In 54 cases the risk of intoxication could not be estimated at the time of the consultation due to lack of information. In 37 cases an intoxication was suspected and medical observation was recommended. An **intoxication** was confirmed by the severity of the symptoms in only **10 patients**. They had to be treated in a hospital. Nine cases were accidentally exposed, one case was a suicidal attempt with 500ml of a household disinfectant. In eight cases the exposures took place at home and two cases were exposed at the agricultural work place.

Substances, exposure and symptoms are listed in the following **table**:

n	Exposure	Substance	Symptoms
2	inhalative	chlorine gas after mixing different cleaning agents, one of them containing sodium hypochlorite	bronchospasm, dyspnea, coughing, mucous membrane irritation
1	dermal	industrial disinfectant for milking machines	chemical burn
1	dermal, ocular	household disinfectant	lacrimation, conjunctivitis, edema
1	oral, dermal	household disinfectant	dyspnea, vomiting, stridor
1	oral	industrial disinfectant for milking machines	vomiting
1	oral	500ml household disinfectant	nausea, vomiting
1	ocular	industrial disinfectant	conjunctivitis, chemical burn
1	inhalative, ocular	industrial disinfectant for milking machines	chemical burn
1	dermal	industrial disinfectant	chemical burn

Conclusion

In relation to the total number of calls in the Austrian PIC, enquiries regarding biocidal products are relatively rare compared to other exposures and the number of human intoxications appears to be small. In 2015 out of 643 cases only 10 had severe symptoms which required medical treatment. No deaths were recorded in the local PIC.