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FDA Issues Warning About BPA Exposure

CBS News Interactive: Healthwatch

NEW YORK (CBS) —

The Food and Drug Administration is encouraging families to limit their children's exposure to a chemical found in thousands of household products.

CBS News correspondent Kelly Wallace reports that, for years, concerned mothers, environmental groups and some scientists have been warning that Bisphenol A, commonly known as BPA, is unsafe, and can lead to cancers, diabetes and other diseases.

Now, in a shift in the agency's position, the FDA is saying the chemical is of "some concern." However, as CBS News found out, limiting your exposure to it isn't easy.

The FDA announced, on the basis of new studies that can test for "subtle effects" that, while BPA is still considered safe, it now has "some concern" about the potential effects of the chemical - especially on the "brain behavior and prostate glands in fetuses, infants and young children."

The American Chemistry Council, a product advocacy group, says BPA is safe.

The council's Lisa Harrison told CBS News, "What's important to remember is the FDA indicated that the BPA has not been proven harmful to children or adults. And that if they believed it was unsafe, they would've issued stronger regulations."

In a non-scientific "Early Show" experiment, Wallace ate a sandwich made from canned tuna, which consumer groups have found to contain BPA. Shortly afterwards, she had her blood drawn. For the next two days, Wallace tried to live a BPA-free life, during which she tried to avoid all foods in cans or plastic containers.

Then she had her blood drawn again. Her serum samples were shipped to the lab of University of Missouri professor Fred Vom Saal.

Vom Saal told Wallace, "The first set of blood that you gave us had high levels of Bisphenol A in it. It's over five times higher than what we find on average in women in the United States."

However, after her BPA-free diet, Vom Saal said her levels were much lower than average.
Wallace asked, "How convinced are you that elevated levels of BPA in people's bodies can lead to cancers, heart disease, obesity and early puberty?"

He replied, "I and other colleagues of mine at an NIH (National Institutes of Health) meeting said, with a very high level of confidence, we think Bisphenol A is a threat to human health."

Wallace added on "The Early Show" it's hard to avoid BPA because, currently, manufacturers aren't required to label products containing the chemical.

However, you can reduce your BPA intake, Wallace said, by limiting your use of canned food. Also, baby bottle manufacturers only make bottles that are BPA-free. In addition, if plastic containers have the number three or seven on the bottom, it means it does contain BPA. Some recycled pizza boxes, also, contain BPA.

But Wallace said you can still enjoy your pizza: "Everything is relative if eaten in moderation."
Bisphenol-A, or BPA—a common, human-made chemical that enters most of our bodies everyday—has been linked to heart disease, a new study says.

BPA is commonly used in consumer plastics, particularly polycarbonate plastic items such as many sunglasses, reusable bottles, food packaging, and baby bottles. It also lines the inside of food cans.

In a sampling of U.S. adults, those with the highest levels of BPA in their urine were more than twice as likely to suffer from coronary heart disease than those with the lowest concentrations of BPA.

The findings almost perfectly dovetail with a 2008 study on the same topic, said study co-author Tamara Galloway, an ecotoxicologist at the U.K.'s University of Exeter.

"If you see it once, that's interesting," Galloway said.

"If you see it twice in a separate population, it's a strong indication that what you're seeing is not just some chance finding."

Frederick vom Saal, a BPA researcher at the University of Missouri-Columbia, agreed that the two sets of "data are compelling and demonstrate repeatability"—the point at which scientific findings move from preliminary to validated.

Study co-author Galloway cautioned, however, that no direct cause-and-effect had been found between BPA and heart disease. It remains possible that the two may be only indirectly linked.

BPA Mimics Estrogen

The American Chemistry Council, which represents the U.S. plastic industry, says that "minimal" exposure to BPA poses no known risk to human health.

Still, BPA's ability to mimic estrogen—and spur reproductive mutations in the womb—has been well documented, leading some cities in the U.S., Canada, and Europe to ban BPA-containing products.
Meanwhile, BPA's "effects in adults have largely been overlooked," Galloway said, despite the fact that the chemical is found in more than 90 percent of the U.S. population.

So Galloway and colleagues examined data from the U.S. National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, the only large-scale data set of adult health and nutrition in the world.

The team examined BPA concentrations in the urine samples of 1,493 adults taken between 2005 and 2006. A quarter of the people had "higher amounts" of BPA, the study says.

"Expand that to six billion"—roughly the world's current population—"and you've got a billion people in harm's way," said the University of Missouri's vom Saal, who was not involved in the new study.

**BPA Exposure Decreasing?**

The previous study, which had used data from 1,455 U.S. adults tested between 2003 and 2004, found an association between higher rates of BPA and occurrences of heart disease, diabetes, and abnormal liver enzymes.

The new study revealed the same relationship, though the diabetes and liver-enzyme links were not statistically meaningful, the researchers say.

There was one big difference between the two data sets that surprised study co-author Galloway: The average level of BPA exposure in the 2005-2006 group was a third lower than the level in the earlier group.

The drop in BPA levels may be because more people are steering clear of obvious exposures to the chemical, and because some industries—such as plastic-bottle manufacturers—have voluntarily cut out BPA, experts speculate.

One unknown that requires "urgent" attention is how exactly the chemical might encourage heart disease in the body, according to the study published tomorrow in the journal *PLoS One*.

**Cutting BPA Risks a No-Brainer**

Bisphenol-A exposure is certainly not the only factor in heart disease, but reducing at least one possible risk is a "no brainer," the University of Missouri's vom Saal said.

For instance, people can limit their exposure by not microwaving polycarbonate plastic food containers (which normally have number sevens on their undersides), avoiding canned foods, and using BPA-free baby bottles, according to the U.S. National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences.

(Explore an interactive showing toxic chemicals that may be lurking in your home.)
"It's not a pretty picture," vom Saal added.

"This is a bad chemical, and it should not be used in the way it's being used."
NEW YORK | In a shift of position, the Food and Drug Administration is expressing concerns about possible health risks from bisphenol-A, which in 2008 it declared safe.

Bisphenol-A, or BPA, is a widely used component of plastic bottles and food packaging.

The agency said Friday that it had “some concern about the potential effects of BPA on the brain, behavior and prostate gland of fetuses, infants and children,” and would join other federal health agencies in studying the effects of the chemical in animals and humans. However, federal health agencies say that more study is needed before any regulatory changes are considered.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services said Friday it would expand efforts to research and track possible harmful effects of BPA. The chemical is used to harden plastics and has been used in water bottles, the lining of food cans and hundreds of other household items.

The action is another example of the FDA under the Obama administration becoming more aggressive in investigating what it sees as threats to public health. In recent months, the agency has stepped up its oversight of food safety and has promised to tighten approval standards for medical devices.

Concerns about BPA are based on studies that have found harmful effects in animals, and on the recognition that the chemical seeps into food and baby formula, and that nearly everyone is exposed to it, starting in the womb.

The health agencies' key concern is the use of BPA in baby bottles and the linings of cans of liquid infant formula.

The FDA ruled last year that trace amounts of BPA that leach out of bottles and food packaging are not dangerous. FDA officials at the time said they would revisit that conclusion after scientists complained it relied on a small number of industry-sponsored studies.

"The FDA says they want to respond more quickly. Now we will see if they are really able to respond to the huge amount of new science showing dangers not recognized two years ago. They should move quickly to restrict the use of BPA in products used by adults as well as infants," said Frederick vom Saal, a biology professor at the University of Missouri.

Vom Saal and other MU researchers were among the first to link BPA to adverse health effects at exposure levels below those the FDA considers safe. Vom Saal has received more than $1 million of the $30 million that government agencies have committed in the next 18 to 25 months to study BPA health risks.

Some scientists think BPA exposure can harm the reproductive and nervous systems and possibly promote cancers. They point to findings of dozens of animal studies, though the negative effects of BPA have not been recorded in human studies.

BPA is found in hundreds of plastic items, everything from glasses to compact discs to canned food, including liquid infant formula. About 90 percent of Americans have traces of BPA in their bodies.

The American Chemistry Council, an industry trade group, reiterated Friday that studies have supported the safety of BPA. The group represents BPA producers, including Dow Chemical Co., Bayer AG and Hexion Specialty Chemicals.
"Extensive scientific studies have shown that BPA is quickly metabolized and excreted and does not accumulate in the body," said a statement by the council. "BPA is one of the most thoroughly tested chemicals in commerce today."

The six major makers of baby bottles and infant feeding cups no longer use BPA in those products in the United States, the FDA said. Those products, which include the Gerber and Playtex brands, represent more than 90 percent of the U.S. market.

The Star's Alan Bavley, Damian J. Troia of The Associated Press and Denise Grady of The New York Times contributed to this report.

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Government: BPA exposure needs limits

MU professor an early critic.

By MILWAUKEE JOURNAL SENTINEL

Saturday, January 16, 2010

After earlier statements that declared bisphenol A safe for all uses, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration said yesterday that BPA affects human development and said it is working to take the chemical out of infant formula cans and baby bottles.

The agency also is working to require BPA manufacturers to report how much of the chemical they are producing and where it is being used so that it can more easily regulate the chemical.

The agency’s action comes after three years of investigative reports by the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel into the government’s failure to limit the chemical’s exposure, despite hundreds of studies that found BPA to cause harm.

Early critics of the chemical used to make hard plastic containers and dental sealants included Frederick vom Saal, a University of Missouri biological sciences professor who has received more than $1 million in federal funding to study the health risks of exposure to the chemical. He called the FDA decision “a huge step forward.”

“The FDA position presented today is consistent with the position that the National Toxicology Program made two years ago,” vom Saal said. “Since then, considerable published research reaffirmed the health dangers of BPA. The FDA says they want to respond more quickly. Now, we will see if they are really able to respond to the... new science showing dangers not recognized two years ago. They should move quickly to restrict the use of by BPA in products used by adults as well as infants.”

“The Japanese industry voluntarily removed BPA from can linings 10 years ago and thus were able to reduce exposure to BPA by 50 percent,” vom Saal said. “Last year, Congress asked companies in the United States to take similar actions; however, companies have made no move toward compliance. A huge problem facing the FDA is that it does not have the regulatory authority to even determine what products contain BPA, and Congress will have to pass new laws giving the FDA the authority it needs.”

In a news conference, the FDA announced several steps to reduce human exposure to BPA in the food supply, including:
• Supporting industry actions to stop producing BPA-containing baby bottles and infant feeding cups for the U.S. market.
• Facilitating development of alternatives to BPA for the linings of infant formula cans.
• Supporting efforts to replace BPA or minimize BPA levels in other food can linings.

“The FDA is supporting a shift to a more robust regulatory framework for oversight of BPA,” FDA Commissioner Margaret Hamburg announced.

More than 6 billion pounds of the chemical are made each year, accounting for nearly $7 billion in sales. The chemical is used to line nearly all food and beverage cans. It is used to make plastic for tableware, eyeglasses, DVDs and hundreds of other household objects.

The chemical, which leaches into food and drink when it is heated, has been linked to prostate and breast cancer, reproductive failure, obesity, heart disease, diabetes and behavioral problems.

BPA manufacturers, however, have maintained it is safe. Indeed, the FDA ruled in 2008 that the chemical was safe for all uses — a decision based on two studies, both paid for by BPA makers.
MU exceeds giving goals

After $1 billion drive, funds still keep coming in.

By Janese Heavin

Monday, January 18, 2010

In the $1 billion scheme of things, the $300,000 donated to create a scholarship for Caldwell County students might seem like a drop in the bucket. For Mallory Trosper and her family, the money provided some much-needed financial relief.

WHERE DID THE MONEY GO?

Below is a look at the use of For All We Call Mizzou gifts by division. Money includes gifts, pledges and trusts made during the campaign, which ran from Jan. 1, 2000, to Dec. 31, 2008.

College of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources: $60.56 million

College of Arts and Sciences: $44.79 million

College of Education: $10.31 million

College of Engineering: $72.57 million

College of Human Environmental Sciences: $12.34 million

College of Veterinary Medicine: $33.79 million

Intercollegiate Athletics: $155.49 million

Libraries: $8.24 million

Trulaske College of Business: $82.64 million

School of Health Professions: $7.85 million

School of Journalism: $73.82 million

School of Law: $21.30 million
School of Medicine: $112.78 million

Sinclair School of Nursing: $7.02 million

Trosper was in the final stretch of earning a nursing degree at the University of Missouri, but the local scholarships that paid for her first two years had run out. She was uneasy about having to take out more loans until she became one of MU's first Flagship Scholars. The scholarship program — created in 2008 as part of the For All We Call Mizzou campaign — provides $15,000 for first-generation college students in specific Missouri counties.

"The Flagship scholarship was a wonderful blessing to her and our whole family," Trosper's mom, Sandy, said. "It helped alleviate financial pressures on all of us."

The scholarship was among nearly 700 created during the For All We Call Mizzou campaign, which brought in $1 billion to MU over eight years. The fundraising effort ended in 2008, but donations continue to roll in. Among the latest gifts is $315,000 from William and Ann Turner of Springfield to create a Flagship Scholar program in Wright County, the fifth county to provide such scholarships.

To date, donors have given MU roughly $67 million this fiscal year, which ends June 30. That's more than halfway to the university's goal of $100 million, development director Beth Hammock said. Although MU raised $120 million in fiscal year 2009, this year's goal is modest, in part, because of economic conditions.

"We're well ahead of our goal and are very pleased with the progress we've made this year," MU spokesman Christian Basi said.

Donations to MU, which include pledges, grants and endowments, have exceeded $100 million every year since 2004. A $25 million gift from Bill and Nancy Laurie for Mizzou Arena also pushed 2002 donations over the $100 million mark.

Before that, donations were totaling less than $70 million a year at MU.

Endowments at MU increased from a total of $344 million in 2001 to $538 million in 2008. The growth represents not only more scholarships but also 91 endowed professorships created during the For All We Call Mizzou campaign.

Although hefty donations made headlines, the $1 billion fundraiser also included faculty members, alumni and supporters who made small pledges, Hammock said. Those contributions were important and created a new generation of givers, she said.

"Part of it was to get people in the habit of giving," she said. "We engaged a lot of people."

Although the university isn't in a formal campaign right now, development staff members continue to contact potential donors. Hammock said the strategy is to find out what would-be
donors are passionate about and then show them how they can support those interests at the university.

Hammock said the next major fundraiser is expected to kick off in 2012 and will aim to surpass the $1 billion mark.

Although still in the planning stages, she expects it to be tied to Mizzou Advantage, a new strategic initiative that aims to cross-pollinate MU departments and build on the university’s existing strengths.

"We’ll be strategic in what we ask for and what we do with people’s hard-earned cash," Hammock said.

Count Trosper as a member of the next generation of MU donors. Trosper, who graduated last month and works at University Hospital, hopes to further her education and someday repay the financial favor.

"It’s exciting to be on the receiving end and make someone like me look forward to being in a position where I can donate," she said. "I know how much it touched my life; I hope to someday touch someone else’s life like that."

Reach Janese Heavin at 573-815-1705 or e-mail jheavin@columbiatribune.com.
Looking back and ahead

Injustices still felt years after King.

By T.J. Greaney

Monday, January 18, 2010

At St. Luke United Methodist Church, several dozen people gathered this morning for a hearty meal of biscuits, gravy, bacon and grits. The annual Poor People's Breakfast has been a tradition since the owners of T&H Restaurant on Garth Avenue launched it in 1994 as a way to carry on Martin Luther King Jr.'s focus on outreach to the poor.

The meal is free to all corners, with donations suggested. As people with tattered, patched coats and scruffy beards waited to be served alongside fresh-faced college students, former First Ward Councilwoman Almeta Crayton took the microphone and told the group to enjoy the meal while digesting its significance.

"There are problems in this community that need to be called forward," she said to calls of "Amen" from the crowd. King "wouldn't have tolerated 30 percent unemployment in the neighborhoods, but we tolerate it."

Crayton said that if King were alive today, he would urge people to "open your eyes."

"We don't have the lynching going on these days, but we still have the injustice going on at that courthouse," Crayton said. "And we still have the same problems we had when he was assassinated in 1968, and I was 8 years old."

Also in attendance were members of the Mizzou Black Men's Initiative. The group of students formed to counteract the high dropout rates among black male college students. A nationwide survey has shown just 36 percent of black males who arrive on college campuses go on to graduate.

"A lot of it comes back to role models," said Marcus Maves, a graduate student and a coordinator of the Mizzou Black Men's Initiative. Mayes and eight MU freshmen volunteered serving meals this morning. "I think it's important to get off the college campus and out into the community that surrounds us and give back."

At 11 a.m., about 70 people gathered at the Martin Luther King Memorial off Stadium Boulevard for a ceremony honoring the slain civil rights leader.
Before the ceremony, the Henderson family of Columbia took photos of the monuments inscribed with King quotes. Richard Henderson Jr. said he feels blessed his children wanted to come rather than take the day as an excuse to lie around the house.

“T bring them here every year,” Henderson said. “You have to know about your ancestors and know where you’re coming from in order to know where you’re going.”

Looking at his 19-year-old son, Richard Henderson III, the father said the teachings of King are like a thread connecting generations.

“The things that he believed in, I also believe in,” Henderson said. “I believe in God, I believe in fairness and equality. So I want to pass that down to my kids so they can pass that down to their kids.”

And as if to remind everyone of how close that thread still is, George Farris, 83, of Columbia stood up to say a few words remembering King. Farris knew King and his father. In fact, Farris’ brother, Isaac, is married to King’s sister, Christine.

“He tried to do everything he could in his short period of life to bring people together because you cannot tell what’s in a book unless you open the book and read it,” Farris said. “And what I’m saying there is you cannot judge someone by the color of their skin or the texture of their hair, but by what they do and how they can do it.”

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More aid arrives, as does anger

Professor home from Haitian trip.

Valerie Kaussen, a University of Missouri associate professor of Romance languages and literature, left of center, meets with other volunteers in 2008 at a school she works with in the Solino neighborhood in Port-au-Prince, Haiti.

By Jodie Jackson Jr.

Monday, January 18, 2010

The day after an earthquake reduced much of Port-au-Prince, Haiti, to what Valerie Kaussen described as “tabula rasa” — a blank slate — she sat down with neighbors in an outdoor camp.

HELPING FROM HOME

Now that Valerie Kaussen is home from Haiti, her focus is on helping with relief efforts. She said her goal is to solicit donated tents, water purification tablets and similar supplies from
camping or outdoor stores and also arrange for the purchase of those items at subsidized prices. For more information or to donate, contact Kaussen at kaussenv@missouri.edu.

Several well-established Haitian relief organizations, including the American Red Cross, offer secure and accountable donation opportunities, she said.

"It's really important that people stay focused on it," Kaussen said. "If they can't give today, if they can give in two months, that will be huge. The rebuilding process will be long and slow."

And finally cried.

"It's just incredible sadness," Kaussen said this morning in a phone interview from her home in Columbia. "Even now, I haven't really figured out my feelings. Your emotions can't catch up with what you're witnessing."

Kaussen, a University of Missouri associate professor of Romance languages and literature specializing in Haiti, was in the Caribbean capital Tuesday when a 7.0-magnitude earthquake shook the ground and created an apocalyptic landscape in a matter of seconds.

Kaussen returned to Columbia on Saturday night, to the relief of her 7-year-old daughter and her husband, Carsten Strauthausen, chairman of MU's Department of German and Russian Studies.

"I needed to get back to my family," Kaussen said. "If I were single, I might have tried to stay."

But shortages of food and water were quickly developing, and secure sleeping conditions were in ever shorter supply, she said.

"I had the chance to leave, and others didn't," Kaussen said. "I didn't want to take up resources."

And there was the overwhelming feeling of helplessness.

"I was walking by places where people were begging for help," she said. "If you can't help, then you're taking up space and taking up resources."

When the earthquake struck, Kaussen was traveling in downtown Port-au-Prince in a taxi. Loud noises and the sight of people falling in the street resembled a shootout or civil unrest, and Kaussen and her traveling companions ran for cover.

"I hid in a storeroom of all places — the worst place to be," she said.

When Kaussen emerged, the devastation was unmistakable. "At that point, I knew it was an earthquake. More buildings were down than were up."

Kaussen, a native Californian and no stranger to earthquakes, said initial news coverage overplayed reports of isolated looting and unrest.
"By far, in the majority of the city, there were people gathering together, making camps. assigning tasks, pooling resources and cooperating and helping each other," she said.

Kaussen saw no violence or tension but is aware that unrest is growing "because they’re starting to starve and die of dehydration."

Delivering disaster aid is complicated, but Kaussen said she thought more could be done to get emergency assistance to the victims.

A lack of communication and networking between the U.S. military and aid organizations already in place in Haiti seemed to be delaying help, she said.

"For whatever reason, aid hasn’t been getting there fast enough," she said.

Even though the United Nations lost staff members and facilities in the quake, it still should have been able to mobilize more quickly, Kaussen said.

"I felt the absence of the U.N. presence and visibility was problematic, to say the least," she added, noting that the United Nations didn’t have a good reputation in Haiti to begin with. "That mission costs millions of dollars. They were virtually invisible."

Kaussen said she hopes to return to Haiti in the spring to continue working with Friends of SODA, a group working to provide free schools and libraries and fill other community needs. One of Kaussen’s recent projects looked at how disasters are represented in literature and film.

"I’m frighteningly well-placed to continue that project," she said.

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MU professor returns from Haiti

By Ben Wieder
January 17, 2010 | 7:17 p.m. CST

COLUMBIA — At dawn Wednesday, less than 12 hours after an earthquake collapsed much of Haiti's capital, Port-au-Prince, Valerie Kaussen set out for home north of the city.

The roads were blocked, so she joined an off-duty police officer for the 3-mile walk back.

She passed numerous dead bodies along the way and found very few of the buildings still standing.

Though she knew the route fairly well, she got lost several times on the way and had to ask for directions.

"I couldn't find any of my landmarks," said Kaussen, a French professor at MU who spent four days in the capital before returning to Columbia Saturday.

The night of the earthquake, she'd camped out with thousands of other people near the presidential palace in the Champ de Mars, a public plaza in downtown Port-au-Prince.

When the earthquake struck at about 5 p.m. Tuesday, she was downtown on a tap-tap, one of the converted trucks that serve as shared taxis in Port-au-Prince.

"You don't feel an earthquake when you're driving," said Kaussen, a native Californian with previous earthquake experience.

She heard loud noises and saw people falling in the street, so she and the other passengers first thought it was a shootout.

Kaussen ran into a stranger's house to hide, but when she came out and saw buildings in rubble, she realized what had happened.
She tried to get home, but the streets were blocked, so her instincts and prior experience guided her to seek an open space at the Champ de Mars.

The cell phone tower for one of the two providers in Haiti had collapsed, but there was limited service immediately after the earthquake, and Kaussen spoke with her mother briefly to tell her she was safe. Within a few hours, cell phone contact was nearly impossible.

Police officers were in the street, directing people away from buildings. The minister of information and coordination conveyed the same message on the local radio, but no one at the Champ de Mars really knew what was happening.

There were aftershocks throughout the first night and into the next day, but the atmosphere was calm on the plaza, with prayers and singing, except when rumors of a tsunami caused a near stampede.

When she climbed through the rubble to get back to her house the next morning, Kaussen found it standing but unsafe for habitation. The majority of her neighbors' homes had collapsed, and she spent most of the day helping them as they removed relatives — barely living or dead — from the rubble.

The second day was when she started crying.

Kaussen, who specializes in Haitian literature and culture, was in the country working with Friends of SODA. SODA is an acronym for a Haitian Creole phrase roughly meaning "neighbors talking together." The group is a network of neighborhood associations throughout Haiti that provide free schools and work to meet other community needs.

She had been working with the program for two years. On this trip, she was helping to establish a library in a neighborhood called Solino, which she thinks was destroyed by the earthquake, and cyber cafes, to provide income and computer resources for community schools. Previously, she taught seminars and helped train teachers.

In the days immediately following the earthquake, Kaussen subsisted on Clif Bars and shared meals of rice and pasta with neighbors and friends. Her house had canned food,
bags of rice and bottled water, which she contributed to her neighbors' collective store of food. But she was so traumatized, she had to force herself to eat.

There was no centralized communication from the government, but people in Port-au-Prince organized themselves, rationing food, water and other necessary supplies.

"They know what to do in a disaster like that," Kaussen said.

As has been widely documented, relief efforts have been slow to reach the population in Port-au-Prince.

Kaussen was particularly disappointed that the United Nations didn't do more to help. "In three days, I think I saw three U.N. trucks," she said.

She was stopped in the streets by Haitians who recognized her as a foreigner and appealed to her to share their needs with aid organizations.

Other cities that have been hit hard also are not receiving enough attention, she said, particularly Jacmel, Léogâne and Les Cayes.

Though Kaussen saw little violence in the days after the earthquake, she is worried that continued delays in aid could make the situation desperate.

"It's so important that the aid get there and that the American and international presence be visible, so they just have the hope and the knowledge that they're not forgotten," she said.

The sense of solidarity in the aftermath of the earthquake made it hard for Kaussen to leave, though she was anxious to be reunited with her husband, MU professor Carsten Strathausen, and their daughter in Columbia.

Commercial flights were canceled, but Kaussen was able to get on a plane chartered by the U.S. State Department and arrived in Miami Friday night and then Columbia Saturday night.

Kaussen already has plans to return in March to help with SODA's rebuilding efforts.
Her academic research focuses on recent literature and film, a recent project looked at representation of disaster.

The earthquake will have a major impact on her work.

"Everything has to be future oriented now," she said. "It's a clean slate."
Efforts collect help for Haiti

Big response nets money, supplies.

By Daniel Cailler and Janese Heavin

Friday, January 15, 2010

Flore Zephir is breathing a little easier today after getting word that her two brothers in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, are alive after Tuesday's devastating earthquake.

**Zephir, professor and chairwoman of the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures at the University of Missouri,** discovered the good news yesterday. She said her brothers' neighbor in Haiti contacted one of his relatives in Montreal, where Zephir's sister lives. That person told Zephir's sister that the men were fine.

"We have no more details, but they are alive," Zephir said this morning. "The neighbor physically saw them and talked to them. That is a big relief because since that tragedy happened ... efforts to call the house and their cell phones were to no avail."

Zephir is now turning her energy toward encouraging Columbia residents to donate to relief efforts.

"Haiti needs a lot, a lot, a lot of help," she said. "The entire Port-au-Prince will have to be rebuilt."

Zephir recommended using text messaging to give. The U.S. Department of State also is backing the effort, which lets people text "Haiti" to 90999 to send a $10 donation to the American Red Cross. The effort has raised more than $5 million.

Mike Odneal, executive director of the American Red Cross Mid-Missouri Chapter, said that since Tuesday, they have been receiving calls and visitors "above and beyond" what is typical. By yesterday's end, more than $2,000 in cash and check donations had come in locally, he said, not counting online donations.

"The donations have come in on their own without any sort of request. It's really been a generous effort," Odneal said.

The Office of Creative Ministries in Columbia began receiving calls within 24 hours of the disaster, said Jeff Baker, volunteer and mission coordinator. The office, affiliated with United
Methodist Church is helping to collect supply kits for the victims — one for basic medical care, another for hygiene and one mothers can use to tend to infants’ needs.

Baker said churches around the state have begun to assemble these items, and next week, his office will gather and deliver them to international relief organizations. “This Sunday I suspect will be a huge day,” Baker said. “Early next week, we’ll start to see a lot of kits coming in.”

Another notable effort is coming from Bleu Restaurant & Wine Bar, 29 S. Eighth St. On Tuesday, its staff will work for free, and profits will be donated to the FloridaOne Disaster Medical Assistance Team.

Bleu co-owner Travis Tucker said he is receiving extra help from food and wine providers donating or providing goods at cost. Tucker’s mother is in Haiti with the Florida team assisting with relief efforts.

Seth Kulik, 30, is a server at the restaurant and one of 11 employees signed up for Tuesday’s event. He estimates about $100 out of his own pocket going toward the fund but said he had no hesitations. “It’s a positive thing for the community as a whole,” Kulik said.

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MU team readies hydrogen car for race

Redesign aims for less weight.

Photo by Gerik Parmele | Buy this photo

From left, Jennifer Claybrooks, Marc Canellas, Forrest Meyen and Mark Koepen bind balsa wood to carbon fiber with epoxy as they make a support rib for Tigegen II, a hydrogen-fueled vehicle. The University of Missouri students plan to race the car in March in Shell’s Eco-Marathon Challenge in Houston.

By Janese Heavin

Saturday, January 16, 2010

Move over, Tigenger I; a new generation of hydrogen vehicle is about to be born.
Members of the University of Missouri’s Hydrogen Car Team are now in the construction stage of Tigergen II, which is expected to compete in March at Shell’s Eco-Marathon Challenge in Houston. MU’s roughly 40-member hydrogen car team has spent more than a year designing the vehicle and is now starting to put the pieces together.

“It’s pretty exciting to get it ready for competition instead of just having a demonstration vehicle,” said Forrest Meyen, a junior and president of the team.

Tigergen II has been entered in the competition’s Urban Concept category, which means the car must include parts found on traditional vehicles such as headlights and taillights, a brake pedal and turn signals. Unlike Tigergen I, which requires a driver to remove the entire top of the vehicle to get in, the new car will have to have a door.

Tigergen II is expected to be some 500 pounds lighter than its predecessor, with the team capping it at no more than 300 pounds. To do so, the body and chassis of the vehicle will be integrated as one load-bearing system composed of layers of carbon fibers. Balsa wood, a strong but lightweight wood, will be used for reinforcing beams and braces.

Similar to Tigergen I, the vehicle’s fuel system will combine hydrogen with oxygen to produce electricity, said Matthaus Young, who is overseeing chemical components of the car. Young wants the car to ultimately run the equivalent of 1,000 miles per gallon.

Designing and constructing the car is expected to cost about $40,000, which the team has already raised.

At the Shell Eco-Marathon, the vehicle will compete for design, efficiency and safety awards. But there’s a lot more riding on the Tigergen II than trophies and cash prizes. If the car qualifies and competes in the challenge, it will be MU’s first hydrogen car to do so.

“As of yet, there hasn’t been a competitive hydrogen vehicle,” Young said. “We need to get it rolling just to prove we know what we’re doing. We need to get this one to work.”

Although it has been a popular attraction at alternative-energy shows and demonstrations, there were too many roadblocks between Tigergen I and an actual competition.

The black-and-gold car initially was supposed to compete in a cross-country challenge that got canceled. Team members then decided to enter it as a demonstration vehicle in the 2008 North American Solar Challenge but decided to pull out days before the race because of technical issues.

“It was sad,” said Jennifer Claybrooks, who was supposed to drive in that race. “But things happen.”

She has been tagged as one of two drivers of Tigergen II this spring, mostly because she is thin but still qualifies for the 110-pound weight minimum. To avoid the snags that kept the first hydrogen car out of the race, Claybrooks said the team will be overly prepared this time.
MU's Hydrogen Car Team continues to keep fans in the loop through its blog, photos of the progress and a real-time webcam showing the crew working on the car in the basement of Engineering Building West. All of those features can be found at www.mizzouhydrogen.org.

Team members can expect to put in some long hours between now and the contest. Meyen estimated he spends 20 hours a week in the garage. But it's worth it, he said.

Sure, the project will be a résumé booster, he acknowledged, but Meyen stressed it also paves the way for future technologies.

And in addition to creating a model that could someday be commercialized, he said, "we're raising awareness of alternative energies."

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Mizzou becomes a center for composing, performing music

BY SARAH BRYAN MILLER
POST-DISPATCH CLASSICAL MUSIC CRITIC

Mizzou as a mecca for new music composition and performance? Why not?

For Jeanne Sinquefield of Westphalia, Mo., it's all about what she calls "the joy of performing something new." To help other musicians experience that joy, she and her husband, financier Rex Sinquefield, put a million bucks where their convictions are and created the Mizzou New Music Initiative at the University of Missouri-Columbia.

It started six years ago with an idea for a competition for young composers from kindergarten through 12th grade, she says. The competition is in its fifth year.

"We discovered that none of these kids had ever met another composer," Jeanne Sinquefield says. "The next thing you know, we were sponsoring a summer camp for the young composers. We had a documentary made about that — and I had college students grabbing me, calling me, asking, 'What about us?'"

Lots of people were asking that.

"My original thought was that we just need to encourage composers," Sinquefield says. "But they need someone to perform their music. They need a performance venue. They need to meet great composers."

The Mizzou New Music Initiative now includes undergraduate composition scholarships, the Sinquefield Composition Prize and the Composer Connection, a distance-learning initiative that allows far-flung young composers to receive guidance from a graduate-student composer.
This summer brings the first Mizzou New Music Summer Festival on July 12-18, with resident composers, the resident ensemble Alarm Will Sound, master classes, a professional recording opportunity and spots for eight young composers from around the world. The deadline for applications is Feb. 1.

For doubters who don't quite see the Columbia campus as a center for music writing, Sinquefield points out a parallel: the famed Iowa Writers' Workshop at the University of Iowa in Iowa City.

"No one's doing composing," she says, observing that composition is a low priority at the conservatories most famed for producing solo performers.

Sinquefield says she doesn't expect every would-be composer to become a Beethoven, or even Samuel Barber, of course.

"This is Little League, Pony League, semipro," she says. "Maybe out of this whole group, you only get one or two composers — but you wouldn't get them at all otherwise."

Sinquefield plays double bass in the Columbia Civic Orchestra and elsewhere in the area, and part of her motivation is personal: She enjoys creating something new, playing something no one else has performed.

"In last two years, we've played four (new) pieces" that came out of the program, Sinquefield says. "Maybe some of the music is terrible — but some of the music is spectacular."

Some of it just needs a little help from people with practical knowledge: the performers who have to make their parts work. Composers usually have a steep learning curve about writing for voice or instruments they don't play themselves.

"People say they don't like new music," Sinquefield says. "I ask them, 'What? You don't like 'Lord of the Rings'? You don't like 'Superman'? That's new music.'"

Sinquefield has great plans for the future, "so if you're a composer, and you
want some help, holler on up."

"We'll see where the music takes us — and maybe some of these kids will make the pros," she says. "Now I just have to work on them to get more bass parts."

For more information on the Mizzou New Music Initiative, visit tinyurl.com/yha6dkj.
Drugs bureau scrutinizes local practices

By T.J. Greaney

Friday, January 15, 2010

A little-known state agency has made waves in recent weeks by issuing orders affecting the operations of the University of Missouri Health Care's Staff for Life helicopter service and DRD Columbia Medical Clinic, a local drug rehabilitation facility.

The Missouri Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs determined both entities failed to keep adequate or up-to-date registration required by federal law to store and dispense controlled drugs.

Early last year, the bureau alerted MU Health that it must obtain federal and state registrations for two of the three helicopters in the Staff for Life fleet. These two helicopters — one based out of Lake Regional Health System in Lake Ozark and the other based at a landing pad in La Monte, just east of Whiteman Air Force Base — did not have the registration required to stock and store controlled substances.

Federal law requires a separate registration for each place where controlled substances are stored. The helicopter based at University Hospital was not affected because it dispenses medication directly from the hospital, but the two other helicopters were storing medication remotely, said state and federal officials.

“It’s a little more serious than just paperwork,” said Kit Wagar, spokesman for the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services. “They have to have a registration. These are federal laws, drug laws in play here. Because right now, there’s basically no accountability. If a hospital were putting drugs on helicopters that they're not registered for, there would be no accountability for what happened to those drugs.”

The DRD Columbia Medical Clinic, 1415 Paris Road, was forced to close its doors briefly because of the registration issue. Wagar said the clinic, which specializes in substance abuse treatment and methadone detoxification, failed to renew its registration at the end of last year.

The clinic was mailed a 60-day renewal notice ahead of time but failed to renew its registration until Monday. The delay forced the clinic to close for at least one day last week. A clinic spokeswoman said the situation caused a one-day service interruption for about 15 percent of the clinic’s patients, but service was quickly restored.

While MU Health works with the state to get its helicopters properly registered, the helicopter at Lake Ozark has arranged to dispense drugs from the Lake Regional pharmacy, and the helicopter
at La Monte has been moved to a landing pad at a hospital in Sweet Springs so it can receive drugs directly from a registered pharmacy there.

"The Staff for Life Helicopter Service is fully operational, and its fleet of three helicopters is providing comprehensive coverage in its service area," MU Health spokesman Matt Splett said. "We are working with the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs to resolve a registration issue."

Local first responders confirmed that there have been no interruptions of emergency service.

This is not the first problem MU has encountered with drug storage. In 2001, MU Health's Medicare eligibility was threatened after problems, including poor storage of drugs, were discovered during an inspection by the state. The next year, a complaint filed by a patient uncovered evidence of lost or stolen drugs at University Hospital and evidence of systemic problems in recording and accounting for drugs there.

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