

## STATE HEALTH OFFICIALS ANNOUNCE REMOVAL OF CONTAMINATED TISSUE BOX HOLDERS

ALBANY, N.Y. (January 12, 2012) -- State Health Commissioner Nirav R. Shah, M.D., M.P.H., announced today that state and local health officials have confirmed that twelve (12) metal box tissue holders containing low levels of cobalt-60 radioactive material were identified and removed from the shelves at four (4) Bed, Bath and Beyond stores in New York State.



Bed, Bath and Beyond has indicated that no other stores in New York have received shipments of these items. However, the product has been available on Bed, Bath and Beyond's website, it has now been removed from the web as well. The product is Dual Ridge Boutique model, model number (DR9M).

Bed, Bath and Beyond has posted information on these products on [www.bedbathandbeyond.com](http://www.bedbathandbeyond.com). Customers can also call the company at 1-800-462-3966.

Shah said that the products were not distributed to the public at the New York stores and there are no reports of prolonged exposure or illness resulting from contact with the products.

Cobalt-60 is a man-made product that utilizes the element cobalt. It has many uses, including sterilizing medical equipment and is a source for leveling devices and thickness gauges used during the production of metal products. It has been used many years in radiation therapy for cancer patients.

The level of radiation exposure from holding this product against body for one hour would be equivalent to a chest X-ray.

On January 10, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) notified Bed, Bath and Beyond and State health officials that the shipment of metal box tissue holders was found to contain the radioactive material. Bed, Bath and Beyond pulled the product from their sales floor.

The New York store locations are:

- 950 Merchants Concourse, Westbury
- 25 Waterfront Place, Port Chester
- 251 Tarrytown Road, Elmsford
- 340 Walt Whitman Road, Huntington Station

DOH, the NYS Office of Emergency Management (NYOEM) and local health officials visited the four stores and confirmed that all twelve boxes are secured.

“State Health Department and other State agencies are working closely with the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), Bed, Bath and Beyond, and local health officials to ensure consumers are safe,” said Commissioner Shah.

Any questions from customers should be directed to Bed, Bath and Beyond at 1-800-462-3966.

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS PERTAINING TO CONTAMINATED TISSUE BOX HOLDERS

## **Are there any health effects from contact with this item?**

There are no immediate health concerns. If you handled and remained in close contact (within 2 feet) for an extended period of time you may receive a small radiation dose that is comparable to levels found while traveling on a cross country airline flight.

## **What should I do if I purchased a metal tissue box from BB&B?**

If it is not the Double Ridge Boutique model there is no indication that the tissue box is contaminated. Only some of the Double Ridge Boutique Tissue boxes purchased after December 27, 2011 are known to have some cobalt 60 and those have been removed from the shelves and stored in a secure location away from the public.

## **Are other metal tissue boxes affected?**

At this time we have no indication that other brands or product lines have been affected. We are continuing to check other BB&B stores to confirm that there are no Double Ridge Boutique tissue holders in their shelves.

## **What should I do with it?**

If you think you have a Double Ridge Boutique tissue holder purchased at BB&B after December 27, 2011, don't panic. Please contact your local health department and request a survey or call our number\_\_\_\_\_. Although it is not an immediate health threat, we suggest you place it in a location a few feet away from you sleep or spend a significant amount of time.

## **I work at BB&B and I stock shelves. Is it a problem if I touched the boxes in question?**

No, it is not a problem. Brief handling of these materials will not expose you to significant levels of radiation.

## **For first responders: If I respond to a fire at a BB&B, do I need to take special precautions?**

No, handle the fire the way you normally would. Your turnout gear is protective enough. The radioactive cobalt is part of the metal matrix and will not become airborne. State health officials can survey the debris afterwards and remove any contaminated material.

Assuming that the person is standing two feet from the tissue box for 8 hours and the box was purchased around January 1st, (this results in approximately 200 "contact hours") at an exposure rate of 50 uR/hr this will result in a dose of 10 millirem which is comparable to a round trip cross country airline flight.



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