

Fears salons are hoarding old chemical straighteners

Demands are growing for the "immediate" recall of all illegal chemical hair-straightening products from UK salons, amid fears many salons may still be sitting on stocks of older products that could pose a risk to the public and staff alike.

Richard Dandy, marketing and media manager at **Spire Hairdressing**, in East Grinstead, West Sussex, has warned many UK salons retain previous generations of illegal products "with nowhere for it to go except in the bin or used on an unsuspecting client's hair", sometimes "at a knockdown price".

Even worse, some salons remained "completely oblivious" to the fact they had product on site that was illegal and could pose a risk to health.

"If they won't act then our authorities must and also ensure that every salon that purchased these illegal products is properly compensated," Richard told *SalonFocus*.

Deborah Evans, chief executive of the **Association of Personal Injury Lawyers (APIL)** said to *SalonFocus* that nobody yet knew the full effects of exposure to formaldehyde from chemical hair-straightening products, but it was something that should be taken "very seriously".

The APIL has received reports of some salon customers suffering eye irritation and chest pain after just one treatment, she confirmed.

"The potential long-term consequences for hairdressers who are exposed to these chemicals every day are alarming," Deborah added.

Lorna Vanderkamp, a personal injury solicitor at legal firm **Robert Jackson Solicitors**, has called for formaldehyde to be banned at all levels -- even below the 0.2 per cent legal limit.

"There will be a new generation of respiratory claims in connection with this... Any hairdressers suffering from respiratory problems, the first question should be have you been exposed to formaldehyde in hairdressing products?" she warned.

The **European Union's Department of Consumer Affairs** issued product safety notifications to all UK trading standards authorities more than a year ago, but few are believed to have investigated because of an ongoing lack of resources, something exacerbated by budget cuts within many local authorities.

The notifications were made after EU **Rapex** (Rapid Alert System for Non-Food Products) alerts that originated from Ireland in 2010, including on **Global Keratin**, **Coppola**, **KeraStraight**, **Marcia Teixeira** and **Brazilian Blowout**.

Many new formulations and products have since been launched that are believed to comply with legislation, but it

is existing older products that are now causing concern.

Christine Heemskerk, lead officer for product safety at the **Trading Standards Institute**, said responsibility for recalling unsafe hair-care products lay with manufacturers if within the **European Community (EC)** or with importers into the EC.

"If either of these is within the UK then once they are aware of any unsafe product they have to notify their local trading standards department and work with them to manage the recall. Failure to notify is a criminal offence," she said.

Jez Barnett, managing director of **KeraStraight**, said his company did a voluntary recall in Ireland at the time of the 2010 Rapex alert, though not elsewhere, as it was not asked to recall UK product.

Asked about earlier formulations sold to UK salons, he added: "Most salons bought small amounts of first and second-generation KeraStraight, so most of that will have been used."

Lincolnshire Trading Standards recently tested a KeraStraight product after **Petra Johnson**, of **Petra Health & Fitness Studio**, a salon in Stamford, complained about hair damage and fumes but the test confirmed the product was legal.

SalonFocus has emailed other suppliers that were subject to Rapex alerts in 2010.

The UK distributor of **Keratin Complex Smoothing Therapy** by **Coppola, 1825**, said it stopped handling the product in January last year because of the formaldehyde issue. However, the product was not withdrawn in the UK by the authorities so no refunds occurred, nor did it receive any complaints.

Tracy Kollmer, in charge of distributor liaison at **M&M International**, the **Marcia Teixeira** supplier, said: "A formal recall was not issued. Clients were contacted by their respective distributor to be informed of the situation. Sales of the three original products ceased. Refunds were provided to those stylists and salon owners that requested them."

Rand Rocket, which took over the UK distribution of **Global Keratin** in January last year, stressed that "no Global Keratin product purchased before January 2011 should be used" unless the hairdresser was sure of its safety. "If any hairdresser is unsure

of whether their product is, or is not, EU-compliant they should contact Rand Rocket," it added.

Finally, **Van Tibolli Beauty** in the US has rebranded **Global Keratin** as **GKHair** and launched **The Best Hair Treatment** with "Juvexin" at **October's Salon International**. This, it has stressed, does not contain **Methylene Glycol** or formaldehyde.



GKHAIR BEFORE (L) AND AFTER: NEW STRAIGHTENER