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CONSUMER CONNECTION

also inside:

SMOG CHECK PROGRAM GETS A NEW STAR

The fine print of price-matching

The dark side of sunless tanning

as needed.

Rx labels get simpler, easier to read

IN THIS ISSUE

Changes in Prescription drug labels 1
Contracts: When you can and can't cancel 4
Guide dogs at restaurants.....8
Spay-neuter license plate still available 10
Protecting pets from hazards 11
Dangers of bath salt drugs 14
The dark side of tanning beds.....15
Changes in Smog Check program 18
New laws for 2013.....21
Understanding retail price-matching guarantees.....22
A roundup of current scams.....24

CONSUMER CONNECTION is produced by the Department of Consumer Affairs' Office of Publications, Design & Editing.
If you have any questions or comments, please e-mail us at consumerconnection@dca.ca.gov.

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Have you ever gotten prescription medicine with the instructions: "Take two tablets twice daily?" Did you think that meant to mean take two tablets 12 hours apart? Or did you think it meant something else?

Studies have shown that patients sometimes find the instructions on their prescription bottle labels vague or confusing. As a result, they could take too much or too little of the prescribed drug, which could slow their recovery from illness or even put their health at risk.

The Department of Consumer Affairs' Board of Pharmacy has been working on solutions to this problem for some time. As of January 1, we see the results of their hard work as the State's new prescription labeling laws take effect. The laws, sponsored by the Pharmacy Board, require specific, easily understandable instructions on each prescription drug label. In addition, pharmacies will be required to provide translations for patients who need the instructions in a language other than English.

The Board, and the pharmacists and pharmacies it licenses, are to be commended for making these important changes to protect patients from medication errors. An article in this issue of *Consumer Connection* explains the prescription label changes and how they affect consumers.

Also happening this month are big changes in another area that affects millions of Californians: Smog Check. Anyone who owns a car that requires an every-other-year Smog Check (generally cars six years old and older), will find different instructions on taking their car in for a Smog Check inspection. The changes are part of a new State law that is intended to ensure that stations performing Smog Check inspections meet higher performance standards under the Department of Consumer Affairs' Bureau of Automotive Repair. The higher standards will help improve California's air quality by reducing pollution caused by cars. Find out how the changes affect you and your vehicle.

Also in this issue are articles on other important topics, including the health hazards of tanning beds, the ins and outs of cancelling a contract, how to interpret retailers' price-matching guarantees, and ways to avoid scams and fraud.

We hope you enjoy this issue of *Consumer Connection*, our award-winning quarterly publication. If you have questions about consumer issues or would like copies of the magazine, please call us at (800) 952-5210.

Denise A. Brown

Prescription labels get a patient-friendly makeover

DAVE'S DISCOUNT DRUGS
12345 MAIN ST, ANYWHERE, US
(800) 987-6543
RX: 411509 Date: 05 Nov 10
SMITH, JOHN
PREDNISONE 10MG TAB/QLTST
Take 6 tablets by mouth daily for 6 days then take 5 tablets daily for 5 days then take 4 tablets by mouth daily for 4 days then take 3 tablets by mouth daily for 3 days then take 1 tablet by mouth daily for 1 day then take 1/2 tablet the last day.
PURPOSE: To reduce inflammation
NO REFS
Expires: 11/05/11 Qty: 90
Dr: R DEAN JENNINGS
This medicine may lower your ability to fight off infections. Avoid contact with people who have contagious diseases.
Take with food or milk
If You Have Diabetes, This Medicine May Change Your Blood Or Urine Sugar. If This Occurs, Call Your Doctor.
It is very important that you take or use this exactly as directed. Do not skip doses or discontinue unless directed by your doctor.
tablet mounted scored white (VHSO 93)

Prescriber: Roger Brown MD
Pink liquid
Quantity: 80 Refills: 0
Dispensed: 03/08/07
NDC: 00789-1234-55
CAUTIONS
IMPORTANT: Finish All Of This Medicine Unless Otherwise Directed By Your Doctor.
Refridgerate. Shake Well Before Each Use.
Discard The Unused Portion Of This Medicine After
(555) 555-9810 1234567-06197
VICTOR'S PHARMACY
1625 N. Market Blvd.
Sacramento, CA 95834

Victor's Pharmacy
1625 N. Market Blvd.
Sacramento, CA 95834
(555) 555-9810
Prescriber: Roger Brown MD
Clear, colorless to light yellow solution
Refills remaining: 3 Quantity:
JOHNSON, JUDITH
Timolol Maleate Ophthalmic Solution, USP 0.25% 10 mL
Manufacturer: Allergan, Inc.
Instill 1 drop in each eye in the morning and 1 drop in each eye in the evening for glaucoma.
Do not use other eye drops for at least 10 minutes
Expires: 05/30/2013
Rx# 06197 1234567
DATE FILLED: 08/31/2010
ORIG RX DATE: 02/24/2010
RPH: KPT
Store DEAH BT5555555
Judith Johnson
5873 EVERGREEN AVE
DAVIS, CA 95615
(555) 555-7888
BAR CODE

VIC HEALTH RX# 06197 1234567
NAME: JOHNSON, JUDITH
VERAPAMIL ER 240 MG TABLET MFG: IVAX PHARM
Take 1 tablet in the morning, and take 1 tablet in the evening
treats high blood pressure
Prescriber: Roger Brown, MD Quantity: 60
Oblong ivory tablet 73 00 logo
Refills remaining: 3 Expires: 09/30/2011

VIC/pharmacy
Rx# 1234567
Ph. (555) 555-6610 RPH: KPT
DATE FILLED: 10/31/2009
ORIG RX DATE: 02/24/2009
1625 N. Market Blvd
Sacramento, CA 95834
JOHNSON, JUDY
VERAPAMIL ER 240 MG TABLET
Ivax Pharmaceutical
Take 1 tablet in the morning, and take 1 tablet in the evening
Treats high blood pressure
Prescriber: Roger Brown, MD Quantity: 60
Oblong ivory tablet 73 00 logo
Refills remaining: 2 Expires: 05/30/2011

Actual Size

JOHNSON, JUDITH
VERAPAMIL ER 240 MG tablet
Ivax Pharmaceutical
Take 1 tablet in the morning, and take 1 tablet in the evening
Treats high blood pressure
Prescriber: Roger Brown MD Quantity: 60
Oblong ivory tablet 73 00 logo
Refills remaining: 3 Expires: 05/30/2011
Rx# 06197 1234567
DATE FILLED: 08/31/2010
ORIG RX DATE: 02/24/2010
RPH: KPT
Store DEAH BT5555555
Judith Johnson
5873 EVERGREEN AVE
DAVIS, CA 95615
(555) 555-7888
VICTOR'S PHARMACY
1625 N. Market Blvd., Sacramento, CA 95834
(555) 555-9810

1625 N. Market Blvd.
Sacramento, CA 95834 Phone: 916/574-7900
RX# 01234567
JOHNSON, JUDITH
VERAPAMIL TAB 240MG SR
MFG: IVAX PHARMACEUTICAL
TAKE 1 TABLET IN THE MORNING, AND TAKE 1 TABLET IN THE EVENING
TREATS HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE
THIS MEDICATION MAY CAUSE DIZZINESS
DO NOT CHEW OR CRUSH SWALLOW WHOLE.
TAKE WITH FOOD OR MILK
DISCARD AFTER: 01/02/2011 UNLESS NOTED ON PACKAGE
4 REFILLS BEFORE 12/15/10 QTY: 50 RPH: GAM

VICTOR'S DRUGS
1625 N MARKET BLVD
SACRAMENTO, CA 95834
(916) 574-7900
JOHNSON , JUDITH
Rx: 06197 1234567
Refills: 3 Qty:
1 AZOPT Ophth 1% Susp 10ml AL
Alcon Laboratories
Instill 1 drop in each eye in the morning and 1 drop in each eye in the evening for glaucoma. *Do not use other eye drops for at least 10 minutes*
Prescriber: Roger Brown MD Expires: 10/01/10

Victor's Pharmacy
1625 N. Market Blvd.
Sacramento, CA 95834
(555) 555-9810
Refill Phone:
(555) 555-9810
www.pharmacy.ca.gov
Rx# 06197 1234567 Prescriber: Roger Brown MD
JOHNSON, JUDITH
NOR-QD 0.35MG TAB Mfg: WL
TAKE 1 TABLET ORALLY DAILY
PREVENTS PREGNANCY
Qty: 84 Date Filled: 09/19/10 GMR Discard: _____
LIGHT YELLOW, ROUND, TABLET, 'WATSON 235'.
Refill After: 11/17/10 Refills: 6 Please call 48 hrs in advance for refills.

VICTOR'S PHARMACY
1625 N. Market Blvd.
Sacramento, CA 95834
(555) 555-9810
DATE FILLED: 10/31/2009
ORIG RX DATE: 02/24/2009
RPH: KPT
Rx# 06197 1234567
JOHNSON, JUDY
VERAPAMIL ER 240 MG TABLET
Manufacturer: Ivax Pharmaceutical
Take 1 tablet in the morning, and take 1 tablet in the evening
Treats high blood pressure
Prescriber: Roger Brown MD Quantity: 60 Expires: 05/30/2011
Oblong ivory tablet 73 00 logo Generic for: ISOPTIN SR
Refills remaining: 02/23/2010

Sample of new labels from the Board of Pharmacy

Easier to understand dosage wording aims to reduce errors

Consumers are likely to have an easier time reading and understanding the labels on their prescription bottles thanks to new regulations now in effect from DCA's California State Board of Pharmacy.

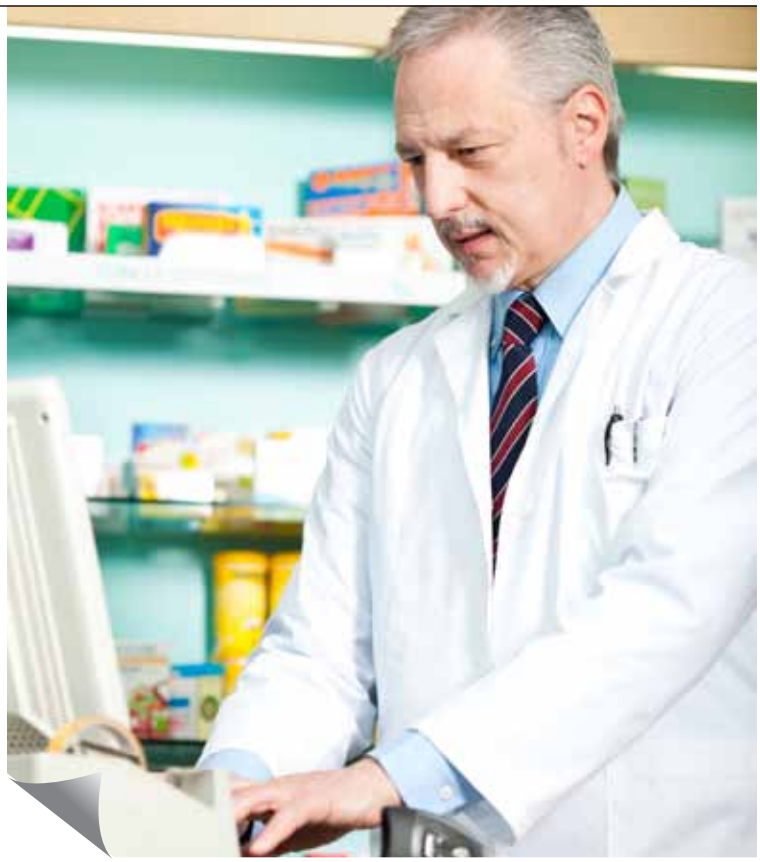
Under the new regulations, all California pharmacies must print prescription drug labels in at least 10-point type and must place key information (including the patient's name, the prescribed drug's name and strength, and directions for use) on the label in a specific order. Whenever possible and appropriate, the directions will also be in standardized, simple language, such as "take one tablet by mouth at bedtime." In addition, consumers can ask their pharmacy to print the label in the slightly larger 12-point type, and the pharmacy must comply.

The changes are the result of a two-year effort by the Board of Pharmacy to establish State standards for a "patient-centered" prescription label required under a 2007 law known as the California Patient Medication Safety Act. A patient-centered label is designed to help reduce medication errors, which represent a significant health problem in California and across the nation.

The Institute of Medicine estimates that more than 1.5 million U.S. residents are harmed each year by medication errors. "Some of these errors can be eliminated if patients better understand the label on their prescription drug containers," said Board of Pharmacy Executive Officer Virginia Herold.

VIC/pharmacy
Rx# 1234567
1625 N. Market Blvd.
Sacramento, CA 95834
JOHNSON, JUDY
VERAPAMIL ER 240 MG TABLET
Ivax Pharmaceutical
Take 1 tablet in the morning, and
take 1 tablet in the evening
Treats high blood pressure
Prescriber: Roger Brown, MD Quantity: 60
Oblong ivory tablet 73 00 logo
Refills remaining: 2 Expires: 05/30/2011

Actual Size



The requirements for the easier-to-read labels went into effect January 1, 2011. Pharmacies were given a year to comply. Any patient receiving prescription medication in California is required to receive his or her prescription label in this format whether it comes from a regular pharmacy, a mail order pharmacy, or a dispensing prescriber.

All pharmacies in the State (totaling more than 6,500) had one year to comply. Since January 1, 2012, the Board's inspectors have been collecting labels to ensure they comply with the regulations. California is the first state in the nation to implement this patient-centered prescription label requirement.

Elements of a patient-centered prescription bottle label

At least half the label must contain the following items, in this order, in at least 10-point type:

- Name of the patient.
- Name of the drug (trade or generic).
- Strength of the drug.
- Directions for taking or using the drug.
- What the drug is being prescribed for, if provided by the prescribing doctor.

Pharmacies can add the pharmacy name, address, phone number and other information as long at the other information does not interfere with the legibility of the required information. For example, the label also must include the prescription name, expiration date, number of refills, and a description of the pill (oblong ivory tablet, for example).

The intent of the Board of Pharmacy was to ensure the information most important to consumers was clustered into a large area of the label in a consistent format to improve readability. In the long run, they hope the standardized directions for use will be used on most labels. These directions have been identified by researchers to be phrased so most patients will correctly understand them.

Dosage wording

To improve patient understanding about how to take the medication properly, the label should use specific wording for the directions whenever appropriate. Here are samples of the new wording:

- Take 1 tablet at bedtime.
- Take 2 capsules in the morning with food.
- Take 1 pill as needed for pain. Do not take more than 4 pills a day.

Samples of the new labels are posted on the Pharmacy Board's Web site **(www.pharmacy.ca.gov/licensing/labels.shtml)**, which also has examples of the newly developed directions for use.

In addition to the labeling requirements, the new regulations also require that pharmacies provide translation services for patients who speak little or no English. Pharmacy staff who are fluent in the patient's primary language can assist, but if no staff member is fluent in the customer's language, interpreters will be available at the pharmacy—often by phone. The services must be provided at no charge to the patient.

The Pharmacy Board is providing dosage directions in Russian, Chinese, Vietnamese, Spanish, and Korean on its Web site for use on prescription drug labels.

Pharmacies are required to display the bright yellow Notice to Consumers posters to remind consumers of their right to larger-print prescription labels, foreign language interpreter services, and more. The information can be displayed on a poster or a video display, both available from the Board of Pharmacy.

More information on the prescription bottle labeling requirements is available online at **www.pharmacy.ca.gov/publications/labels_info.shtml.**

CONTRACTS:

Know your rights to cancel

So you're thinking about buying that new car you've had your eye on. Why not make that splurge – you can always change your mind and get out of the deal, right?

Probably not. That rumored "cooling-off period" doesn't exist for car purchases. In fact, there is no statutory cancellation period for automobile sales or leases, as stated in the Department of Consumer Affairs Legal Guide K-6, *Consumer Transactions With Statutory Contract Cancellation* Rights found here: **www.dca.ca.gov/publications/legal_guides/k-6.pdf**.

However, several laws do give consumers the right to cancel contracts in specific transactions such as health clubs, home loans, or dating services within a short time after they're signed — from three to 30 days — without any catches. Usually all that's required is a written cancellation to the seller within the period allowed by statute (usually measured in business days, where "business day" means any calendar day except Sundays and specified holidays).

In order to cancel these types of transactions, the buyer must sign and date the cancellation notice, which must state that the buyer is cancelling the contract. The buyer should send the notice to the seller by certified mail, return receipt requested, to the address that the seller has given in the original sale documents. The buyer should keep a copy of the notice for his or her own records, to be able to prove that the notice was given and what was said. Generally, the buyer's notice of cancellation is effective when it is deposited in the mail with the proper address and postage. The buyer should note the exact date, time, and place of mailing on the buyer's own copy (the postmark should back you up).

You may be able to get out of a car contract, but only under certain circumstances. The following cancellation rights generally apply to all kinds of sales and contracts conducted in the State:

A buyer may have a legal right to cancel a contract if his or her consent to it was obtained through fraud or other material misrepresentation, or if the bargain fails in some important way through no fault of the buyer, or if the buyer didn't know it was a contract. The buyer should contact an attorney or other expert if the buyer thinks that he or she may have one of these grounds for cancelling a contract. Contracts can also be cancelled if they are breached or were entered into by mistake, under fraud or undue influence, or if unconscionable or illegal. Even if there is no specific statutory cancellation right in a case like that, you may want to consult an attorney to help you.

You also have protections under California's "lemon law." If a warranted consumer product (including a vehicle) cannot be repaired after a reasonable number of repair attempts, the warrantor must either replace it or reimburse its price, less the amount attributable to use.

Additionally, the Home Solicitation Sales Act provides cancellation rights (with some exceptions) for consumer goods contracts for the sale, lease, or rental of goods or services costing $25 or more. Almost any consumer contract entered into in a consumer's home (or somewhere other than the seller's place of business such as a swap meet or on an airplane) can be canceled by sending a written notice of cancellation to the seller by midnight of the third business day after the consumer signed the contract. This protects consumers against pressure to make an immediate purchasing decision when a salesperson appears at their home, or where the sales pitch is given at a nonbusiness location. Similar protections also apply to most phone sales.

Special rules apply when the merchant is a contractor (see Legal Guide K-10 — *Contracting with a Contractor: The Homeowner's Right to Cancel* at **www.dca.ca.gov/publications/legal_guides/k-10.shtml**).

Required Disclosures

Anyone who solicits a sale or order for goods or services at a buyer's residence, either in person or by telephone, must make certain disclosures to the buyer. Before asking any questions or making any statement other than a greeting, the seller must clearly reveal that the purpose of the contact is to effect a sale by doing all of the following:

- Identifying himself or herself by name.
- Identifying the trade name of the person or company that he or she represents.
- Identifying the kind of goods or services being offered for sale.
- Showing identification which contains the name of the solicitor, the entity he or she represents, and its address if it's an in-person solicitation.

The seller in a home solicitation sale must also make certain written disclosures. If they are not made, the cancellation right continues beyond the initial three-day period until the required disclosures are made. If the buyer has a right to cancel under some other law, the cancellation period may also be extended.

In a transaction covered by the Act, the seller's contract with the buyer (or the buyer's offer to purchase) must be in writing, and must be in the same language used in the sales presentation (for example, Spanish). The document must be dated and signed by the buyer, and must state on the first page the name and address of the seller and the date on which the buyer signed the document. It must also contain specific cancellation language.

So if you're having second thoughts about a deal you've made, don't panic. There may be a way out. This may require legal help. For more information, access DCA's Legal Guides online at **www.dca.ca.gov/publications/legal_guides/index.shtml** or call DCA at (800) 952-5210.

Special Handling: Sales of Personal Emergency Response Units

A "personal emergency response unit" is an in-home transmitter or a two-way radio device which is connected to a telephone line through which a monitoring station is alerted to an emergency and emergency assistance is summoned. The device typically is worn by the purchaser (examples would be Life Alert, Medical Alert and Medical Guardian).

A home solicitation contract or offer for the purchase of a personal emergency response unit may be cancelled until midnight of the seventh business day after the buyer signs an agreement or offer to purchase which complies with certain requirements.

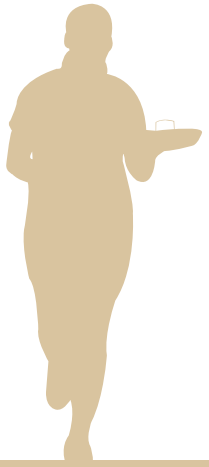
However, the normal three-business-day cancellation period applies if both of the following are true: The unit has two or more stationary protective devices which are used to announce intrusion or fire; and, it was installed by a licensed alarm company with, and as part of, a home security alarm system.

CONTRACT CANCELLATION PERIODS

Credit repair services:	5 days
Dating services:	3 business days
Discount buying services:	3 days
Door-to-door sales:	3 business days
Electric service contract:	3 business days
Funeral contracts (pre-need):	Indefinite
Health studio services:	5 business days
Home improvements contracts:	3 business days if a security interest results or may result
Home loans:	3 business days
Home repair or restoration contracts following a disaster:	7 business days
Home-secured transactions:	3 business days
Home solicitation sales:	3 business days
Insurance:	
- Life under-$10,000:	10 - 30 days as determined by insurer
- Disability, seniors, life:	30 days
- Property:	Indefinite
Internet sales (when order has not been filled):	30 days
Job listing services:	3 business days
Mail/telephone sales (when order has not been filled):	30 days
Seminar sales:	3 business days
Service contracts:	
- Used cars, home appliances, and home electronics:	30 days
- New motor vehicles:	60 days
- Any type of goods, pro-rata refund less cancellation fee:	Indefinite
Telephone sales (when order has not been filled):	30 days
Water treatment devices:	3 business days
Weight-loss services:	3 business days

Guide dogs *—not pets—* are OK in restaurants

The California Board of Guide Dogs for the Blind is partnering with the California Restaurant Association to educate restaurant staff on what to do when they encounter a guide dog team.



"It can often be awkward for both the restaurant employees and the visually impaired customer who enters a restaurant with a guide dog, yet it need not be," said Eric Holm, president of the Guide Dog Board and a guide dog user. "A little education about what the law requires and about proper etiquette can go a long way toward making the encounter a smooth one."

The partnership between the Guide Dog Board and Restaurant Association was announced in September as part of Guide Dog Day celebrations organized by the Board. The Board has developed materials that can be used by restaurants to train their staffs.

It is estimated that more than 7,000 Americans rely on guide dogs, frequently trusting them with their lives. California is the only state that licenses guide dog schools and instructors to ensure that high standards for teaching these remarkable animals are met. Nearly 400 guide dogs graduate from California-licensed programs every year.

Under Federal law, guide dog users are allowed to bring their dogs into restaurants even if the restaurant has a "no dogs allowed" policy. A new tip sheet from the Guide Dog Board has guidance for restaurant staffers on dealing with guide dog users and their dogs. The guide, which was produced in cooperation with the California Restaurant Association, includes the following tips:

For the host or hostess:

Access—Only two questions may be asked of a guide dog user or any other service animal user: 1) Is the animal required because of a disability? 2) What work or task has the animal been trained to perform? No other questions about the person's disability or the dog are allowed. The handler does not have to show any certification or registration for the dog.

Seating—There is no particular requirement for seating an individual with a guide dog, including proximity to a door or kitchen, or seating at a table instead of a booth. Guide dogs are trained to be seated in many environments.

Menu—When providing a menu to the guide dog handler, offer to read the menu out loud. If a Braille menu is available, offer it to the handler.

For the server:

Placing an order—When taking an order from a guide dog user, always address the person, not the sighted person accompanying him or her.

Delivering food—Describe where you are placing items. For example, say, "I'm placing the water glass to the right of your hand."

Bill of sale—When delivering the check, read the contents to the handler.

For more information about guide dogs in restaurants, go online to **www.guidedogboard.ca.gov** or contact your local restaurant association.

Business owners seeking more information about access requirements under the Federal Americans with Disabilities Act, may visit **www.ada.gov/regs2010/smallbusiness/smallbusprimer2010.htm.**

Love pets?

Consider a pet lover's license plate

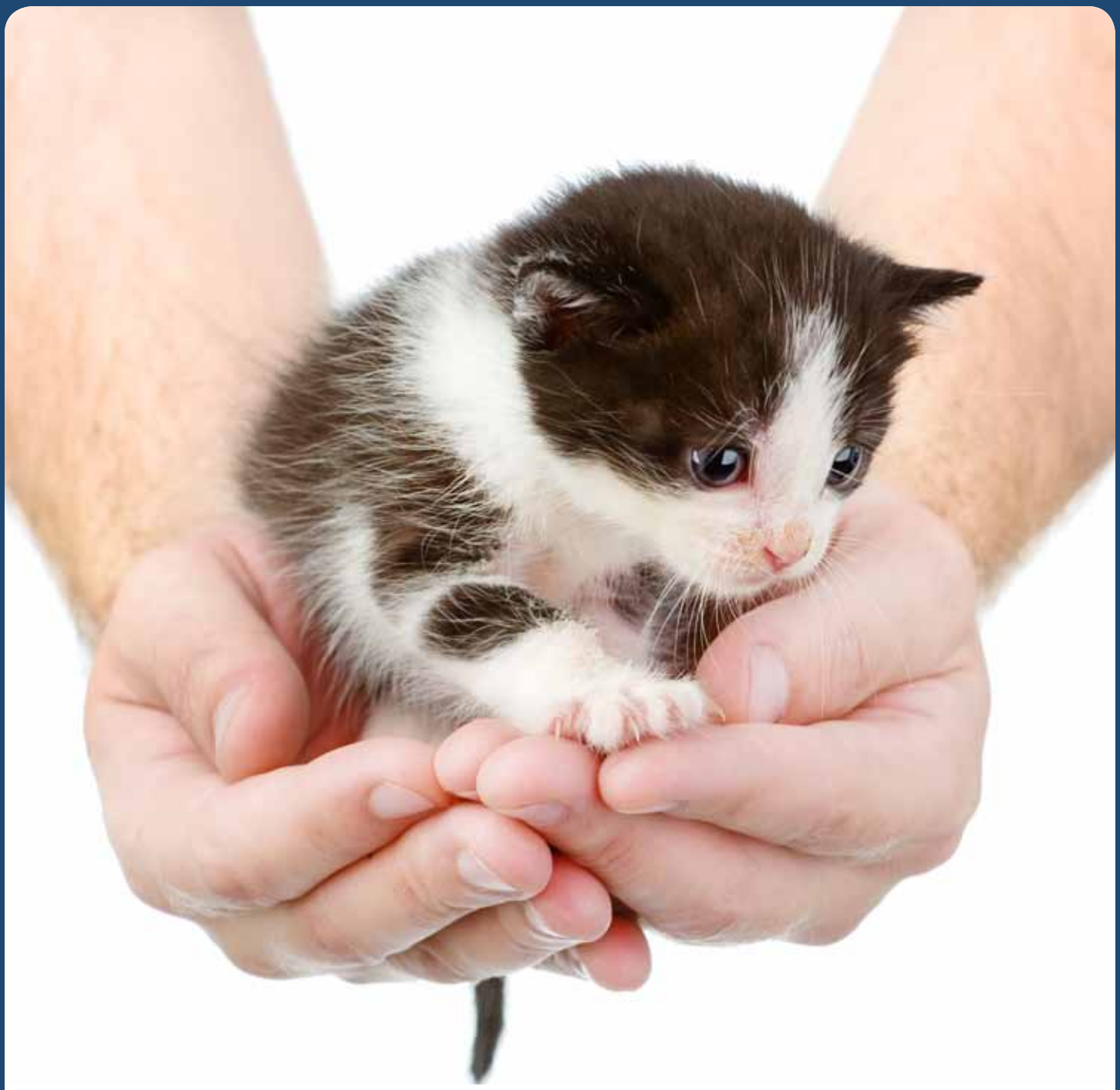
If you're a pet owner, you know how important it is to spay or neuter your pet. California shelters must kill thousands of dogs and cats each year because of overpopulation. More than half of the million or so dogs and cats that end up in the State's shelters meet that fate.

The California Pet Lover's License Plate raises money for spay-neuter programs which help reduce pet overpopulation. The license plate features a drawing of a dog and cat by actor Pierce Brosnan and carries the words "Spay & neuter saves lives." The approximate cost is $50 for a standard license plate (with an annual renewal fee of $40), and $98 for a personalized plate (annual renewal fee $78). Money raised from the plates will be distributed to local communities to fund free or low-cost spay-neuter clinics.

The Veterinary Medical Board of California, part of the California Department of Consumer Affairs, is sponsoring the project. Supporters include by the Humane Society of the United States, ASPCA, Best Friends Animal Society, Pet Food Express, PETA, the Jason Debus Heigl Foundation, the Millan Foundation, Found Animals Foundation, and more.

For more information about the spay-neuter license plate or to sign up for one, visit **www.petloversplate.com**.

For more information about the Veterinary Medical Board of California, visit **www.vmb.ca.gov**.



Protecting Your Pets

We coddle them, carry them, walk them, and give up our best furniture to them, but even with all the attention we pay to our beloved pets, it can still be a struggle to keep them safe all the time.

Hazards exist throughout your home – and away from it — many of which you may not be aware of. Here are some things to watch out for:

Around the house

Many common household items spell danger for pets: bleach, pills, detergents and cleaners, antifreeze, rodent and pest bait, mothballs, and tobacco, among others. You may already know to keep chocolate away from your pet, but did you know grapes and raisins can lead to kidney failure? Or that onions, avocados, and coffee are all toxic to pets?

According to the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA), of the 167,000 poisoning cases handled by the Animal Poison Control Center in 2010, the top culprit was human medications. This frightening statistic appears in the ASPCA's brochure, "101 Things You Didn't Know Could Harm Your Pet." You can also visit "A Poison Safe Home" at **www.aspca.org** for tips. The ASPCA lists human medications, alcoholic beverages, and numerous foods (especially fatty ones) as things to avoid feeding your pet.

The Humane Society of the United States offers the following tips for you and your pets.

A number of seasonal plants are potentially poisonous to pets if nibbled or eaten, including ivy, poinsettias, holly, and mistletoe. Also watch out for plant bulb kits with amaryllis and other plants in the lily family as well as narcissus and other plants in the daffodil family. This link will take you to a downloadable list of plants dangerous to pets: **www.humanesociety.org/animals/resources/tips/plants_poisonous_to_pets.html**.

Chocolate can be hazardous, but also watch out for Xylitol, a common sweetener usually found in gum. And individually-wrapped candies are double trouble as some pets might eat both the candy and the wrapper.

Avoid the urge to give your pets table scraps, especially bones. Bones easily splinter and can cause serious health problems, even death — pets can choke on them and they can also splinter and become lodged in or puncture your pet's digestive tract.

If you are planning to take your pet with you when visiting friends and relatives, be sure to contact them in advance to find out if your pet is welcome. It might be best to board your pet or hire a reputable pet sitter instead.

Don't leave candles unattended. Pets may accidentally knock them over and spill wax or start a fire. They can also singe whiskers and tails!

Contact your veterinarian for more information. In addition, the Pet Poison Helpline at (800) 213-6680 is a 24-hour animal poison control service available for pet owners and veterinary professionals who require assistance with treating a potentially poisoned pet. The ASPCA also has a 24-hour poison help number at (888) 426-4435 (a fee may apply).

Traveling

The law says we humans have to wear seatbelts, but animals traveling by car should also be properly restrained. According to the American Veterinary Medical Association, cats should always be confined to a cage or in a cat carrier to allow them to feel secure and prevent them from crawling under the driver's feet. Dogs riding in a car should not ride in the passenger seat if it is equipped with an airbag, and should never be allowed to sit on the driver's lap.

Also, according to California Vehicle Code 23117, it's illegal to transport any animal in the part of a vehicle intended for cargo (such as a pickup bed) unless:

- The space is enclosed; or
- The vehicle has installed means of preventing the animal from being discharged; or
- The animal is cross-tethered to the vehicle, or is protected by a secured container or cage, in a manner which will prevent the animal from being thrown, falling, or jumping from the vehicle.

In addition, you've likely already heard how deadly it can be to leave a pet in a parked car on a warm day. It's not only cruel, it's a crime: Guilty owners face fines of up to $500, six months in jail, or both. Interior temperatures in a car can quickly rise to dangerous levels, even on cool days. And older animals are more susceptible to temperature extremes, including cold.

Preventing heat illness in your dog is a relatively simple process, say the experts at VetInfo.com. Provide your pet with plenty of fresh, cool water on hot days, and make sure he has a shady spot in which to escape the heat. Limit his exercise periods on hot days, and make sure he's well-groomed to prevent heat from being trapped in his coat.

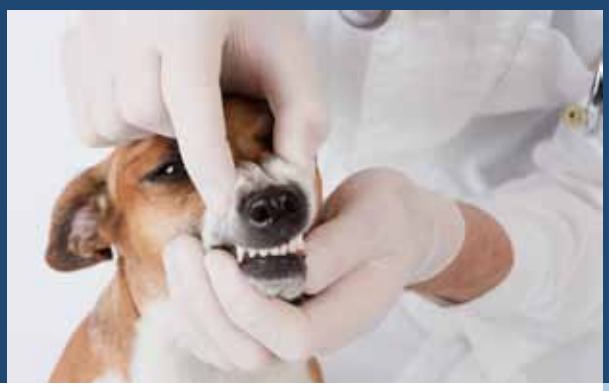
Outdoors

A country romp or camping trip can expose your pet to wildlife threats including skunks, raccoons, porcupines, snakes, and more. Before venturing to the great outdoors, ask your veterinarian about flea, tick, and heartworm prevention and make sure your pet is vaccinated against rabies. There is no treatment for rabies and it is deadly for dogs, so prevention through vaccination is critical.

You can also help keep your pets safe with a free pet safety pack from the ASPCA. It includes pet rescue window decals to alert rescue personnel that pets are inside your home in the event of an emergency. The pack also includes an ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center magnet — a great way to keep the toll-free emergency number (888) 426-4435 and Web site address handy in case your pets get into something they shouldn't.

A Word on Teeth Cleaning

The practice of "anesthesia free dentistry" for pets can be seen advertised throughout the State. California Code of Regulations section 2037 mandates that the only items that an unsupervised, unlicensed person may use to clean an animal's teeth are cotton swabs, gauze, dental floss, dentifrice, toothbrushes or similar items.



Bath Salts

A **dangerous** new drug not for the tub

When you think about bath salts, do you think of Grandma soaking in the tub for her "arthur-eye-tis?" The Epsom salt Grandma used, and the spa-type fragrant crystals that you dissolve in your bath water, are nothing like the bath salts you've seen on the news lately.

Law enforcement officials and public health experts have been warning about the growing use of a different type of "bath salt." It's not salt, and is not for your bath. Instead, this bath salt is a powerful and dangerous synthetic (chemical) drug that can cause extreme paranoia, panic attacks, hallucinations, violent behavior, and worse.

Federal and State officials have been working to combat the spread of the drug. In fact, new State and Federal laws have been passed to ban some of the chemicals used in the drug. Steps are also being taken to crack down on manufacturers and distributors.

In late July, the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) announced the results of Operation Logjam, the first-ever nationwide enforcement action against people behind the production and sale of synthetic drugs such as bath salts. Sellers and manufacturers in 109 U.S. cities were targeted in the enforcement action that netted 90 arrests, $36 million in cash, and 19 million packets of synthetic drugs. Seven cities in California were among the places targeted, according to a DEA news release in July 2012.

The drug, which can be mixed with food or water, or inhaled, has also been spurring calls to poison hotlines. In 2010, according to the American Association of Poison Control Centers, poison centers nationwide responded to about 3,200 calls relating to synthetic drugs, including bath salts. In 2011, the number of calls jumped to more than 13,000. Sixty percent of the cases involved people 25 and younger.

Learn more:

Drug guide from the **Partnership at DrugFree.org: http://www.drugfree.org/drug-guide/bath-salts.**

Tanning:

Its true dark side

New law aims to protect teens

When Jaime began a tanning regimen as a teenager in an effort to be popular by doing what everyone else was doing, she didn't know it would lead to a near decade-long battle with a deadly disease that would eventually claim her life just before she turned 30.

On her lunch hours during high school, Jaime would go to a nearby tanning salon almost every day. She went from being a tanning bed addict to a melanoma patient in just a couple of years. When she was 20, she noticed a mole on her back that started to bleed. It was melanoma, the deadliest form of skin cancer.

Now, thanks to a new California law, teenagers are no longer allowed in a tanning booth.

Another teenager, Brittany, started indoor tanning regularly for prom and kept going after the event. Against her mother's warnings, she continued to use tanning beds four times a week for three years. When she was 20, her mom noticed a mole on her back and encouraged her to see a dermatologist. Test results showed that she had stage II melanoma. Treatment required time off from college to undergo surgery to not only remove the mole but also lymph nodes under her arm, followed by a painful, six-week recovery.

These are just two of the stories shared on the Web site of the American Academy of Dermatology (AAD). In fact, melanoma is the most common form of cancer for young adults in their mid to late 20s, and the second most common form of cancer for adolescents and young adults 15 to 29 years old.

According to the AAD, the incidence rates of melanoma, the deadliest form of skin cancer, have been increasing for at least 30 years. By current estimates, more than 3.5 million skin cancers in more than 2 million people are diagnosed annually.

The major risk factor for melanoma is exposure to ultraviolet light, and studies show that tanning bed use increases the risk of melanoma — especially in women aged 45 years or younger. Each day, more than 1 million people tan in one of 50,000 tanning facilities in the United States, and it's a common practice among teenagers, says the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP). And in terms of biological activity, the intensity of UVA radiation produced by large, powerful tanning units may be 10 to 15 times higher than that of the midday sun, says the AAP.

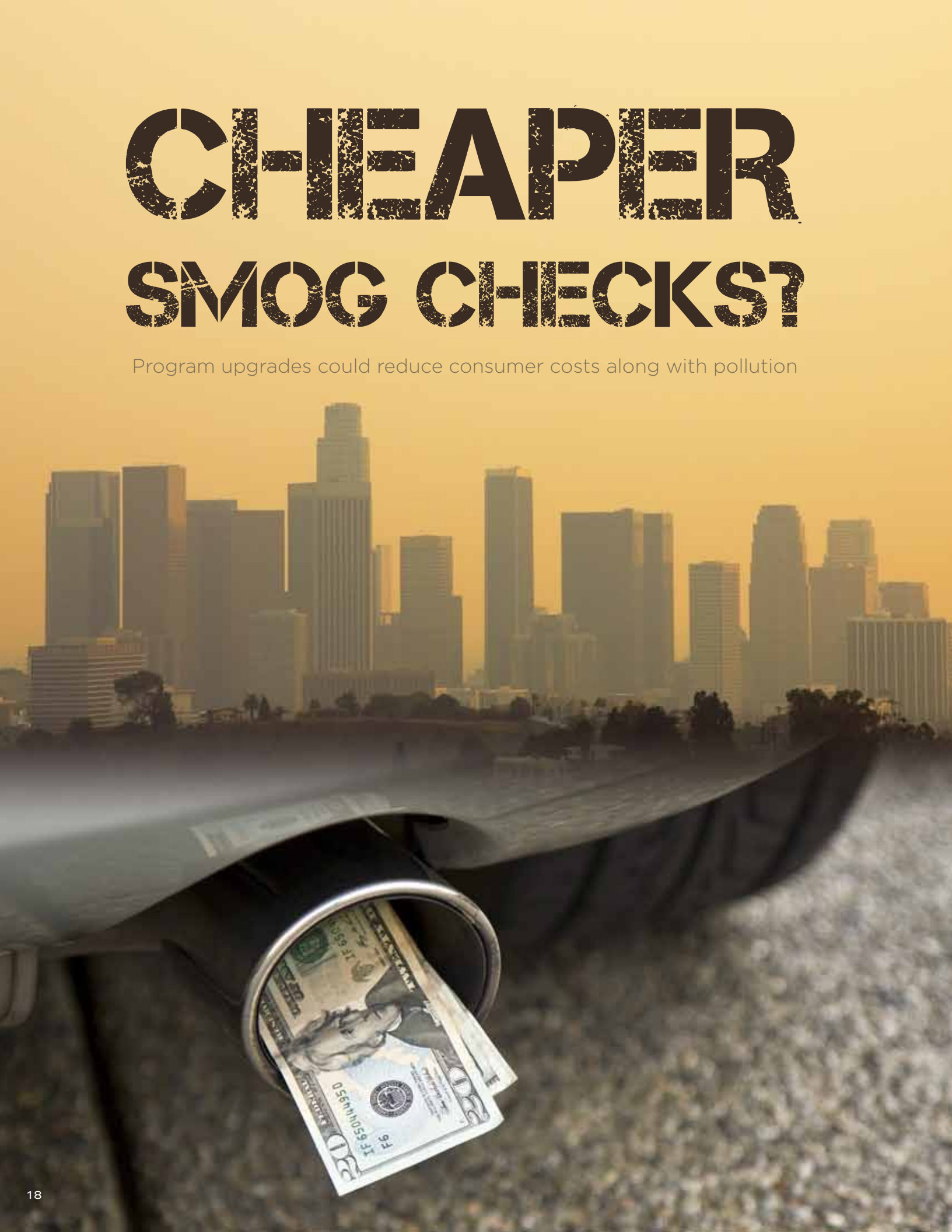
Studies have shown that exposure to sunlamps or tanning beds is known to be a human carcinogen. Sunlamps and sunbeds emit primarily UVA and UVB radiation and increase the risk of malignant melanoma. The longer the exposure, the greater the risk, especially in individuals exposed before the age of 30 and individuals who have been sunburned. Malignant melanoma of the eye also is associated with exposure to sunlamps, as reported by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' national Toxicology Program in its "Report on Carcinogens" (12th Edition).

Senate Bill 746, which became effective on the first day of 2012, amended the California Business and Professions Code and requires tanning facilities to follow certain rules.

- People under 18 are prohibited from using an ultraviolet tanning device. Age must be proven using a government-issued photo I.D.
- Tanning facilities must have personnel present during operating hours who can explain how to use the tanning devices correctly and help customers do it.
- Each customer must be provided with properly sanitized eyewear that protects the eye from ultraviolet radiation and allows adequate vision to maintain balance. Customers who refuse to use the eyewear are prohibited from using the tanning booth.
- Each customer must be shown how to use suitable physical aids, such as handrails and markings on the floor, to maintain proper exposure distance as recommended by the manufacturer.
- Each tanning device must have a timer with an accuracy of plus or minus 10 percent of any selected timer interval. It must also be remotely located so that customers can't set their own exposure time.
- Maximum exposure times recommended by the manufacturer must be followed.
- The interior temperature of the tanning facility must be controlled so that it doesn't exceed 100 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Customers must sign a written statement every calendar year acknowledging they've read and understood the warnings before using the tanning device and agree to use the provided protective eyewear.

CHEAPER SMOG CHECKS?

Program upgrades could reduce consumer costs along with pollution



IT'S BEEN NEARLY 30 YEARS since California instituted its Smog Check Program with the simple goal of helping to improve the air we all breathe. Since then, the program — administered by the Department of Consumer Affairs' Bureau of Automotive Repair (BAR) — has been identifying vehicles in need of maintenance and assuring the effectiveness of their emission control systems.

According to the California Air Resources Board, the program removes about 400 tons of smog-forming pollutants from the State's air every day. Smog Check inspections are designed to identify high-polluting vehicles, then either require repairs or encourage their owners to "retire" them.

Now, changes are coming that could save motorists both time and money during Smog Check tests.

The most tangible difference for consumers will occur sometime later this year, when the Smog Check inspection will move from a tailpipe test of a vehicle's emissions to a check of the vehicle's on-board diagnostic (OBD II) sensor, something that's been installed in all vehicles since 1996. Using the vehicle's own emissions monitoring system should help ensure standardized testing while minimizing costs to Smog Check stations, which — in theory — is a savings that can be passed on to consumers. According to BAR, prices for the Smog Check using onboard diagnostic systems will be driven lower by a combination of cheaper equipment, reduced technician time spent performing the test, and more competition. However, you should still shop around for the best deal.

The first change affecting consumers was the launch of the STAR program, which took effect January 1, 2013, and changes the stations to which so-called "directed" vehicles must go for Smog Checks. State law requires that a percentage of vehicles have their Smog Check inspection performed at a STAR station. These vehicles may be selected randomly or because they are identified as being likely to fail, for example. Previously, these vehicles were directed to either Test-Only or Gold Shield stations. Now they will be directed to any STAR station, which is a station that meets or exceeds high-performance standards set by BAR.

The Gold Shield Program ended on December 31, 2012. Some STAR stations are licensed to perform only tests, while others are licensed to perform both tests and repairs. Each station is required to post a sign stating the services it performs.

To learn more, or to find a Smog Check station near you, **visit www.smogcheck.ca.gov or call (800) 952-5210.**

WHAT IF MY CAR FAILS A SMOG CHECK?

In order to complete your vehicle's registration, you will need to obtain the repairs necessary for it to pass a retest. Before getting it fixed, find out if you are eligible for BAR's Consumer Assistance Program, through which you can apply for financial assistance for emissions-related repairs. While funds are available, eligible vehicle owners have some help in the form of:

- Payment for the voluntary retirement of their vehicle ($1,000 or $1,500); or
- Financial assistance of up to $500 for emissions-related repairs performed at a shop authorized by BAR.

All emissions-related repairs to correct a smog failure must be performed by a licensed smog technician at a licensed station.

If your vehicle is directed to a STAR station, repairs cannot be performed at the Test-Only station, but the final test after repairs may be done there, or at a STAR station.

HOW DO I APPLY FOR ASSISTANCE?

First, submit an application—don't have any repairs done to your vehicle until you are notified that it's been approved. If you applied for repair assistance, you will receive an approval letter and a list of participating STAR stations. If you applied for vehicle retirement, you'll receive an approval letter and a list of contracted dismantlers.

For more information, find the Consumer Assistance Program online at **www.smogcheck.ca.gov** or call the Department of Consumer Affairs' Consumer Information Center at **(800) 952-5210**.

New consumer laws for 2013

Many new laws affecting consumers were approved in 2012. Here are a few of the significant ones, along with their bill numbers and authors. For more details on these and other bills, go online to **www.leginfo.ca.gov**. These laws took effect January 1, 2013.

AB 1588 *Atkins*	**Professions and Vocations: Reservist Licensees: Fees and Continuing Education** Any person licensed by DCA entities who is called to active duty by the United States Armed Forces or the California National Guard may have his or her license fees and continuing education requirements waived.
SB 1329 *Simitian*	**Prescription Drugs: Collection and Distribution Program** Expands the types of pharmacies and facilities that are eligible to participate in a drug repository and distribution program.
AB 1904 *Block*	**Professions and Vocations: Military Spouses: Expedited Licensure** Requires DCA's boards and bureaus to expedite the licensure process for the spouse or domestic partner of a member of the military on active duty.
AB 1854 *Brownley*	**Vehicles: Inflatable Restraint Systems** Makes it a crime to install, rewire, or reinstall a vehicle's computer system or airbag system to falsely indicate the airbag safety system is in proper working order.
AB 1777 *Ma*	**Disposition of Cremated Remains** Authorizes cremated remains to be moved from a durable container into a dissolvable scattering urn prior to the disposition of the remains at sea by boat.
AB 1548 *Carter*	**Practice of Medicine: Cosmetic Surgery: Employment of Physicians and Surgeons** Increases the criminal penalty for a business providing outpatient elective cosmetic procedures or treatments in violation of the ban on the Corporate Practice of Medicine.
SB 1446 *Negrete McLeod*	**Naturopathic Doctors** Naturopathic doctors may independently prescribe or administer natural substances via intravenous or intramuscular routes only when such substances are chemically identical to those for sale without a prescription.
SB 1289 *Corbett*	**Postsecondary Education: Private Student Loans** Higher educational institutions must disclose certain student loan information in appropriate online and printed financial aid materials to students.

Online vs. in line price-matching
Check the small print

We know you've done it.

We know you've gone to a retail store to try out an item, then bought it online for less. Retailers call it *"showrooming"* (as in the local store serves as a showroom for the online seller). Store owners hate showrooming because of the business they lose. Consumers like showrooming because of the money they save.

Over the years, retailers have tried several tactics to fight showrooming, but this holiday season some of the big players adopted a "if-you-can't-beat-'em,-join-'em" philosophy. They're accepting (even encouraging) showrooming by offering to match online prices.

But will it work?

"Price-match guarantees can theoretically save shoppers a fortune, allowing them to shop locally but also get the advantage of lower online pricing," said Edgar Dworsky, founder of Consumer World. However, Dworsky warned buyers that many price-matching policies have complicated requirements and exclusions that could trip up even the savviest of shoppers.

Consumer World surveyed eight major retail chains and one online-only business (Amazon) about their price-matching or money-back policies. The survey showed that the policies are often complicated and have restrictions that may actually limit shoppers savings. View the survey results at **www.consumerworld.org/pages/pricematch2012prs.htm**

Some retailers will match a lower price only from a another local retailer and only if the consumer brings in a current printed advertisement for the exact same item. If you've already purchased the item, you may be able to get the price difference refunded to you, but there may be time limits. You may have to bring in your receipt during the store's refund period (90 days, for example), and the advertised price must still be in effect. Be aware that some stores that offer price matching won't match online prices, even from their own store's Web site. Some stores won't match prices from warehouse stores. Limited-time prices or "doorbuster" deals will probably not be price-matched. Private-label items are not eligible for price-matching. Most stores post all the terms and conditions on their Web site. Sometimes an individual store manager (or even a clerk) will be able to make an exception to the policy.

Even if you meet all the store's conditions for the price matching, you're not likely to save much money. Retail outlets are very competitive, meaning that multiple stores offer the same items at similar prices. On popular items, an in-store price may be close to an online price. Saving a few dollars (or even a few cents) may not be worth your time and trouble.

Another point to keep in mind is that price matching may end up hurting consumers. If a retailer is matching a low price on popular items, it may be raising the price on other items to make up difference.

A consumer's preference of online versus in-store shopping may come down to multiple factors besides price, including service, selection, convenience, loyalty to a store, layaway, return policies, even the role of a knowledgeable, local sales staff. The social aspects of shopping with friends and the instant gratification of being able to buy an item in a store and bring it home immediately may be considerations, too.

The satisfaction you get from finding the perfect item at the lowest cost? Priceless.

SCAM ALERTS

A ROUNDUP OF CURRENT CONS, FRAUDS, AND SCHEMES

Don't fall for flushing

A new trend is popping up around the State in the car maintenance business—it's called "Wallet Flushing." It's the aggressive selling of unnecessary services such as flushing your car's transmission, power steering, and brake or radiator fluid when you go in for an oil change or other service.

"We don't have a problem with them actually selling the services, we have a problem with the way they're selling the services," says Russ Heimerich, Chief of DCA's Office of Public Affairs. "[They say] 'well, your manufacturer recommends this, or it will void your warranty'—that we do have a problem with."

What can you do? Check your owner's manual to find out when the manufacturer recommends these services. Don't feel pressured into buying services you may not need. If you have a complaint, call DCA's Bureau of Automotive Repair at **(800) 952-5210.**

Giving the Gift of Gift Cards

Gift cards were at the top of this year's holiday wish list according to the National Retail Federation's 2012 Holiday Consumer Spending Survey. Easy, right? Yes and no.

The problem? Fees. Bankrate.com's 2012 Gift Card Survey found that 100 percent of all bank- and credit card-issued gift cards surveyed came with purchase fees ranging from $2.95 to $6.95. Only nine percent of the store-brand cards in the survey came with a purchase fee.

Jan Herron, a Bankrate analyst, gives this advice: General purpose cards—with the Visa, MasterCard, or American Express logo on them are not a good value because of the fees associated with them. Store-branded gift cards are better.

If you received a gift card, ask the giver for the receipt; proof of purchase may be needed if the card is lost. Also, register your gift card as soon as possible—if you lose it, or it gets stolen, you may have a better chance of getting it replaced.

Lastly, if you received a gift card, use it! Although California law mandates that there can be no expiration date on gift cards, issuers can still charge a dormancy rate of $3 per month if the card is not used within 12 months of purchase.

It's not your grandma's Pyrex

It's not your grandma's—or even your mom's—Pyrex. The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) reports that injuries from shattering glass baking dishes have risen steadily since 1999. ConsumerAffairs.com, a consumer advocacy agency, says it has received nearly 1,600 reports of breakage for the two top-selling brands of bakeware—Pyrex and Anchor Hocking—since 1998. Is it the dishes, or is it operator error?

World Kitchen—maker of Pyrex, and Anchor Hocking—stands by its products, and states it has specific safety rules for using its glass bakeware. These instructions are provided in leaflets that come with the item when purchased; some pans are even embossed with the rules.

According to an article from NBC News, many cooks are unaware that glass baking pans come with specific safety rules. Here are safety rules posted by World Kitchen on the CPSC's SaferProducts.gov Web site:

- Always place hot glass bakeware on a dry, cloth potholder or towel. Never place hot glass bakeware on top of the stove, on a metal trivet, on a damp towel, directly on a counter or in a sink.
- Never put glass bakeware directly on a burner or under a broiler.
- Always allow the oven to fully preheat before placing the glass bakeware in the oven.
- Always cover the bottom of the dish with liquid before cooking meat or vegetables.

Manufacturers also say that dropping or banging the product can weaken its integrity and make it more prone to breakage.

The pans really aren't your grandma's Pyrex. The original Corning glass pans, manufactured in 1915, were made of very strong borosilicate glass. NBC News reports that virtually all glass pans sold in the United States since the 1980s are made of a different material—soda lime silicate glass.

The bottom line? If yours is one of the 80 percent of U.S. homes that has glass bakeware in the cabinet, cook with care—and follow the safety rules.

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