Listen to the science on the safety of BPA in canned foods

BY STEVEN HENTGES, PH.D ON JUNE 3, 2015 IN INDUSTRY

For decades, epoxy resins made from BPA have been used safely as a protective coating in food and drink cans. These coatings help to prevent food contamination and foodborne illness, which are very real threats, and epoxy resins are very effective at this important task.

Contrary to what you might read in a recent report from an environmental activist organization, a strong scientific track record supports the safety of BPA in food contact materials, including epoxy resin protective coatings. For example, in January 2015, the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) concluded that "BPA poses no health risk to consumers of any age group (including unborn children, infants and adolescents) at current exposure levels." Similarly, in November 2014, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) concluded that "FDA's current perspective, based on its most recent safety assessment, is that BPA is safe at the current levels occurring in foods."

If you listen to the science, the high performance of epoxy resins and safety of BPA together make a compelling story. But only if you listen, and not everyone does.

Ignoring the science this week, the Environmental Working Group (EWG) put out a report entitled "BPA in Canned Food: Behind the Brand Curtain." Along with an aggressive fund raising effort, the report is presumably intended to apply market pressure on the canned food industry to move away from epoxy resin can coatings, which have 35 years of proven performance at protecting food safety.

To be sure that they can continue their pressure, not to mention fund raising, long into the future, EWG also writes: "The public cannot rely on current federal laws that regulate chemicals and food additives to ensure that BPA replacement chemicals are safer than BPA-based materials." Questioning the safety of BPA replacement chemicals is particularly ironic since a main reason replacements are even being considered is because of groups like EWG.

Cut through the noise and listen to the science. The FDA answers the question "Is BPA safe?" with one clear, unambiguous word – "Yes."