

Coke Recalls Bottled Water Newly Introduced to Britain

Coca-Cola Company ordered a recall of some 500,000 bottles Dasani bottled water in Britain

ALAN COWELL / NY Times 20mar04

[\[Coca-Cola Admits Dasani is Tap Water - Reuters 4mar04\]](#)

LONDON, March 19 - Only weeks after it introduced Dasani bottled water into Britain, the Coca-Cola Company ordered a recall of some 500,000 bottles on Friday after finding excess levels of bromate. The chemical, with long-term exposure, has been linked to a higher risk of cancer.

Dasani is the second-biggest-selling bottled drinking water in the United States after Aquafina from PepsiCo Inc. Newspapers here mocked Coca-Cola for charging up to \$1.80 for a small bottle of purified tap water when it was introduced in January.

A Coca-Cola spokesman at the company's headquarters in Atlanta, Kelly Brooks, declined to say how much the recall would cost. "The financial impact is not the issue at present," he said.

The recall is not on the same scale as one in 1999, when Coca-Cola products were banned for 10 days in Belgium after 30 schoolchildren became sick after drinking Coca-Cola. The company later traced the contamination to a chemical used in the cleaning of transportation pallets. That recall cost the company hundreds of millions of dollars.

In London, Jonathan Chandler, the director of communications for Coca-Cola Europe, said the process used to purify Dasani water relied on calcium chloride, which contained levels of bromide. Bromide, in turn, produced traces of bromate during a part of the purification procedure, he said.

When stocks of purified water were tested last December before Dasani was introduced, Mr. Chandler said, the level of bromate was found to be within the permissible limit under British law of 10 parts per billion. In routine testing this week, however, the level was found to vary from 10 to 25 parts per billion.



There had been no customer complaints, Mr. Chandler said. "There was no signal until we did the routine tests," he said. Mr. Chandler declined to say when Dasani would be re-introduced. "Our first priority is to withdraw the product," he said.

Mr. Chandler said the bottles pulled back from stores under the current recall would be destroyed.

The Food Standards Agency of Britain said bromate "is a chemical that could cause an increased cancer risk as a result of long-term exposure, although there is no immediate risk to public health."

Coca-Cola said the withdrawal began on Friday and would be about 85 percent complete within 24 hours.

Only the British market was reported to be affected among the 20 countries where Dasani is sold. Still, it is unclear how the withdrawal might affect Coke's position in the booming European bottled water market as a whole.

William P. Pecoriello, an analyst with Morgan Stanley in New York, said the withdrawal could embolden Coca-Cola's rivals, like Nestlé, which produces Perrier water, to disparage the brand in other parts of the Europe.

"This could damage Coke's ability to relaunch Dasani in the U.K. as Nestlé and other players will likely take this opportunity to remind consumers that they are selling spring water vs. the purified tap water Coke is selling," Mr. Pecoriello wrote in a report. "This could have implications for the Dasani brand in France," where it is to be introduced in April.

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