



New Mexico Regulation and Licensing Department
BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS DIVISION
New Mexico Board of Dental Health Care and
New Mexico Dental Hygienist Committee

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**State Regulators Warn Public of Possible Health Risks
Posed by Unlicensed Teeth Whitening Operations**

SANTA FE, May 23, 2008 – The unlicensed teeth whitening businesses springing up in New Mexico may pose a threat to public health, according to the New Mexico Regulation and Licensing Department Board of Dental Health Care.

Improper application of the whitening agents used can cause tooth hypersensitivity, irritation or burning of the gums, and in some cases death of the affected tooth, resulting in the need for root canal therapy or even extraction. Carbamine peroxide, the bleaching agent commonly used in tooth whitening, can also have adverse health effects for patients who have leaking fillings, cavities, loose crowns or fractured teeth.

Other concerns include possible violations of sterilization standards, hazardous waste disposal and other regulations set by the Department of Health and OSHA, such as barrier techniques; sterilization standards; hazardous waste disposal and the use of devices which are only to be used by a dentist or dental hygienist.

In New Mexico, tooth whitening is classified as a dental procedure that can only be performed by a licensed dentist or licensed dental hygienist under the supervision of a licensed dentist and after the patient has been examined by a licensed dentist.

The Board of Dental Health Care has directed the Regulation and Licensing Department to take appropriate measures to ensure that all teeth whitening services offered to the public are in full compliance with state law and federal regulation. Under state law any person who attempts to practice dentistry without being the holder of a license entitling the practitioner to practice dentistry in New Mexico is guilty of a fourth degree felony.

If members of the public have information on teeth whitening services or would like to file a complaint, they may contact the Board of Dental Health Care at (505) 476-4680, or through the Regulation and Licensing Department website at www.rld.state.nm.us/dental.

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