

# **GLASS AS A MATERIAL FOR BODY JEWELRY**

## **THE CALIFORNIA LEAD LAW**

The new Lead-Containing Jewelry Law was recently passed and regulates the amount of lead permitted in children's jewelry and body piercing jewelry in the state of California. The legislation defines body piercing jewelry as, "Any part of the jewelry that is manufactured or sold for placement in a new piercing or mucous membrane, but does not include any part of that jewelry not placed in a new piercing or mucous membrane." The law regarding body jewelry went into effect March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2008. The penalty is \$2,500 per day per violation.

The law is somewhat ambiguous regarding glass, as glass is not listed as an acceptable material for jewelry in a new piercing or set in a mucous membrane. While this is a concern, the bottom line is that enforcement is aimed at lead-containing jewelry; therefore leaded glass types are the most directly effected by this law. It is probable that the authors of the law were not aware that glass is a common material in body piercing jewelry. Lead is added to glass mainly for its optical properties; it makes glass denser and increases the refractive index, making it more brilliant. Lead crystal generally has 32% lead content by weight, a large amount by any standard. There is already legislation that restricts the use of lead crystal for use as wine decanters, as the acidic wine causes a release of lead into the liquid. Other glass types may have lead added as an additional ingredient, including colored soda-lime and borosilicate glass types. MSDS sheets should be requested from glass manufacturers to confirm that lead free glass is being used.

Swarovski crystal is a leaded glass used as a decorative element in piercing jewelry. The California Lead-Containing Jewelry Law says this in regards to Swarovski crystal;

"Glass and crystal decorative components used in adult jewelry are considered Class 1 materials. There are no lead limits for Class 1 materials used for adult jewelry. Therefore, the use of leaded crystal, including Swarovski crystal, may be used in adult jewelry. The use of crystal or glass decorative components in children's jewelry is limited to a total of 1 gram. However, the law specifies that glass or crystal decorative components that contain less than 0.02% (200 ppm) lead by weight and have no intentionally added lead are not part of the 1 gram calculation. In other words, the use of Swarovski crystal (or any other crystal 0.02% (200 ppm) or higher in lead) in children's jewelry is limited to 1 gram total. Crystal or glass components containing less than 0.02% (200 ppm) lead by weight with no intentionally added lead may be used in children's jewelry without any weight limitations."

Since the Swarovski crystal is used in gem sets AND weighs less than 1 gram, there is no legal problem using piercing jewelry with Swarovski crystal in gem sets where it does not come into contact with initial piercings or a mucous membrane.