

# Bottlers blame bottle bursts on careless consumer

By Becky Brugman

Contrary to national reports, local bottlers receive few reports of soft drink bottle explosions.

Of the 2.4 million bottles produced annually at Lincoln's Mid-Continent Bottlers, it receives an average of one complaint a year, according to Bill Simpson, production manager.

He said most broken bottles are caused by abnormal use. One example—the quart-size bottles, usually placed on the top shelf at a grocery store, are put in a cart, rubbed against each other in the cart or grocery sack then bounced against each other in the car, he said.

Simpson said people must remember that these are glass products and are easily broken.

A Pepsi Cola Bottling Co. spokesman, who refused to be identified, said people must act responsibly when handling soft drink bottles. He said the amount of carbonation in pop does not affect whether a bottle breaks. Fruit drinks usually have less carbonation than other types of soft drinks, but break as easily, he said.

The bottles are made to withstand much more carbonation pressure than they hold, he said.

Bottles should be stored in a cool, but not cold place, he said. Temperature extremes cause expansion, leading to more breakage problems, he said.

Both companies said they do all they can to prevent circumstances leading to breakage problems and that restrictions regarding bottle handling at the companies lessen the probability of breakage.

Simpson said bottles coming to the Omaha location are sorted and inspected by hand three times before they are inspected electronically. All these steps take place before filling the bottles, he said.

Both companies agreed on filling regulations. They follow parent company regulations rather than the state's because parent company regulations are more stringent, they said.

State regulations say washing temperatures should be 130 degrees.

The Pepsi Cola Bottling Co. uses a 152-degree temperature.

Simpson said the company uses a higher temperature than state regulations require for more quality control.

The state, county and parent company inspects the local plant about three or four times a year, Simpson said.

The fact that 7-Up is a clear drink is an additional reason for the high standards, he said. In a cola drink, a person cannot tell if there are "things" in the drink. In a clear drink, they are visible.

Mid-Continent bottles 7-Up, RC Cola, Diet Rite Cola, Squirt, Frosty Root Beer, Dr. Pepper, Sugar-free Dr. Pepper and Canada Dry mix as well as Canada Dry Strawberry, Orange and Grape. Nehi fruit drinks also are

bottled there.

Pepsi Cola Bottling Co. of Lincoln bottles Pepsi Cola, Diet Pepsi, Teem, Nesbitts, Hires Root Beer, Mountain Dew and Tru Treat.

In regard to reusing bottles both companies said they do not use chipped, cracked, or damaged bottles in any

other way.

Mid-Continent bottles are reused about 15 times, Simpson said. Pepsi Cola bottling reuses it about seven to ten times, the spokesman said.

Both companies said cans are outselling reusable bottles.



## Refilling reusable bottles costs money

Speaking of reusable bottles, Mike Simpson of Mid-Continent Bottlers of Omaha said reusable bottles take more energy to refill than it takes to fill new bottles.

Simpson said it is more economical to rinse new bottles and fill them.

It takes 800 gallons of water an hour to rinse the bottles as opposed to 3,600 gallons an hour to wash and rinse the old ones.

Simpson said cans are more expensive to produce than bottles because the metal costs more than bottles. They are outselling bottles however, he said.

People are willing to pay the cost difference for convenience, he said.

Simpson said reusable bottles continually are being promoted because second to cans, they are what the public wants. The public thinks it saves more energy to reuse the bottles than to fill new ones. This is not true, he said.

Simpson said by next fall, all bottles will be converted to the metric system.

Already on the market is the liter bottle. Gradually, until fall, the markings on bottles will be changed, he said.

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