
Abstract

This paper reviews 18 publications that advocate the use of product tampering and other poisoning methods as techniques for exacting revenge against individuals and corporations, as methods of committing murder, and for other criminal purposes. Several of the particular techniques recommended in these publications subsequently have been used in criminal tampering incidents. The published sources of technical guidance for the would-be tamperer and poisoner are examined in detail to alert forensic scientists, law enforcement authorities, and the food and drug industry to the particular techniques that are being advocated. Possible criminal and civil liability of the publishers and authors is discussed. The author suggests that food and drug retailers consider the wisdom of selling magazines that advertise the availability of revenge and murder manuals advocating product tampering and poisoning, that food and drug manufacturers test the effects on their products of the contaminants that are being recommended, and that investigators be alert to the existence of such manuals and mail-order suppliers of poisons.

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Product Tampering

Product tampering [1] is the deliberate contamination of goods after they have been manufactured. It is often done to alarm consumers or to blackmail a company. An especially bad case was the cyanide poisoning of Bromo Seltzer containers. The worst case of product tampering in America in the twentieth century happened in Chicago in 1982, when poison placed in packages of Tylenol killed seven people. Tampering motives have included revenge, financial gain, and publicity for various causes. Tampering incidents have triggered false reports and copycat cases, both of which occurred in 1993 in response to a fabricated story that syringes were found in Pepsi-Cola cans. Volume 33, Issue 5 (September 1988). Dangerous Information: Product Tampering and Poisoning Advice in Revenge and Murder Manuals. (Received 17 December 1987; accepted 29 December 1987). CODEN: JFSOAD. This paper reviews 18 publications that advocate the use of product tampering and other poisoning methods as techniques for exacting revenge against individuals and corporations, as methods of committing murder, and for other criminal purposes. Several of the particular techniques recommended in these publications subsequently have been used in criminal tampering incidents.