

Safer Products Project

Alternatives for a Healthy Home

A Project
of Clean
Production
Action

P.O. Box 153, Spring Brook, NY 14140 USA • Tel: +1 716-805-1056 • www.safer-products.org • info@saferproducts.org

Fact Sheet: How to Reduce Toxic Chemicals in Your Home

It might seem overwhelming to read about all of the toxic chemicals found in common household dust. But there are things that can be done to make your home safer.

1 Get Involved—contact your local or state environmental group working to advance safe chemical production and ask them how you can help their efforts (for the seven states partnering on this project, please see contact info below. For other states, please visit www.besafenet.org). These and other national groups will be promoting the passage of the Green Chemistry Bill and working to reform federal chemical regulations.

California

Center for Environmental Health
www.cehca.org
Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition
www.svtc.org

Maine

Environmental Health Strategy Center
www.preventharm.org

Massachusetts

The Alliance for a Healthy Tomorrow
www.healthytomorrow.org

Michigan

Ecology Center
www.ecologycenter.org

New York

New York Citizens Environmental Coalition
www.cectoxic.org

Oregon

Oregon Environmental Council
www.oeconline.org

Washington

Washington Toxics Coalition
www.watoxics.org

2 Don't buy products made of polyvinyl chloride plastic (PVC), or 'vinyl'—this includes vinyl floors, vinyl shower curtains and imitation leather goods such as vinyl bags and toys. PVC requires a cocktail of chemicals such as phthalates and organotins tested for in this study. Vinyl plastic uses the letter 3 to distinguish it from other plastics (or you can call the company to find out what kind of plastic it is). Visit the Healthy Building Network to find PVC-free building materials (www.healthybuilding.net) and Greenpeace International data base of PVC alternatives (www.greenpeace.org/au/pvc/).

3 Use natural forms of pest control in your home and gardens. For information visit the Pesticide Action Network's website at www.panna.org/resources/advisor.dv.html. Also visit www.beyondpesticides.org.

4 Buy curtains, carpets or furniture that are free of brominated flame retardants or perfluorinated chemicals. Contact companies directly to ask if they use these chemicals in their products. See www.safer-products.org for more information. In addition, you can replace carpets with wood floors, cork tiles, linoleum and area rugs. For more information visit www.healthybuilding.net and www.greenpeace.org/au/pvc/

5 Next time you buy cosmetics, choose products that are free of suspect chemicals. Visit the Safe Cosmetics Campaign to find brand name companies that are phasing out harmful chemicals (www.safecosmetics.org).

6 Purchase your electronic products from companies that avoid brominated flame retardants (BFR). You can find a list of companies which are leading the field at www.computertakeback.org and www.cleanproduction.org or visit our website at www.safer-products.org. Also ask companies when they intend to phase out the use of PVC cables.

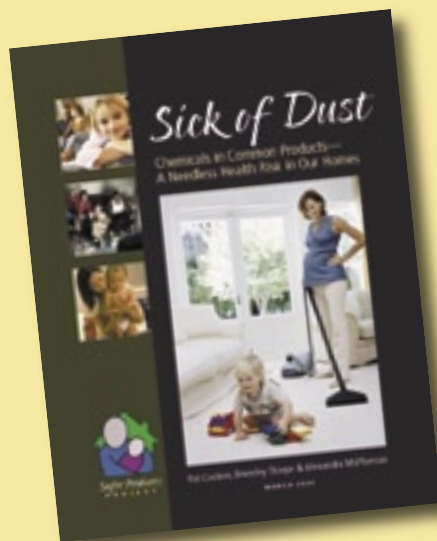
7 Initiate a safer chemicals program in government procurement of all products and services at the local or state level for bulk purchases of computer and electronic goods, and other product sectors outlined in our report. Initiate pesticide-free bylaws for all public spaces, and a phase out of vinyl use in all public buildings and furnishings.

8 The same can be done in the private and institutional sector. If your employer buys in bulk from suppliers, find out about their chemicals policy. At a minimum your company should have a strict phase out date for all Chemicals for Priority Action and a timeline for transitioning to safer materials. It is imperative that buyers source non-PVC plastic

(vinyl) for building materials and consumer products. Big buyers can influence the market in a way that individual consumers can not.

9 If you are a retailer ask your buyers to implement a safer chemicals agreement with their suppliers and make your policy public. Responsible retailers such as IKEA have implemented a strict chemicals policy which they enforce through frequent spot checks on their products. Other retailers have joined retailer consortiums to exert more pressure on their chemical suppliers. Post your chemicals policy on the web, through product labelling or through other forms of direct communication with your consumers.

10 Prioritize local and organic food in school cafeterias, hospitals and other institutional settings. Initiate pesticide-free bylaws in your local community.



These 10 recommendations were excerpted from the March 2005 report, *Sick of Dust: Chemicals in Common Products A Needless Health Risk in Our Homes.*

For a copy of the full report please visit www.safer-products.org.