



# Safer Products Project

Alternatives for a Healthy Home

A Project  
of Clean  
Production  
Action

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## Fact Sheet: Legislation to Reduce Toxic Chemicals in Our Homes

According to the March 2005 report: *Sick of Dust: Chemicals in Common Products A Needless Health Risk in Our Homes*, we are all being exposed to a cocktail of toxic chemicals on a daily basis. These chemicals are legally used in common household products, despite the fact that they are known to pose health risks, especially to children.

A major overhaul of the federal Toxic Substance Control Act is needed. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) needs the authority to collect scientific information about these chemicals and require safer substitutes.

Europe's overhaul of its chemicals regulation could be used as a model. Their new program entitled REACH (Registration, Evaluation and Authorization of Chemicals) will require that industry publicly provide basic health, safety and environmental impact data for over 30,000 high volume chemicals—many of which are widely used in every day consumer products. Those chemicals of high concern would need authorization to be produced and used.

While the U.S. federal government is lagging, state governments are taking action. The following demonstrates the progress being made around the country, including procurement guidelines for products free of persistent, bio-accumulative or toxic chemicals; hazardous chemical phase-out programs; toxic use reduction planning requirements; and labeling requirements.

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 and more about what you can do to keep your home safe, please visit [www.safer-products.org](http://www.safer-products.org).

**Alaska** The Anchorage School District bans the use of pesticides linked to health or environmental damage.

**California** Penta-BDE and Octa-BDE to be banned (toxic brominated flame retardants). PROP 65 demands labeling of carcinogens for consumer products. Banned pharmaceutical uses of the pesticide, Lindane. At least five school districts in CA ban the use of pesticides linked to health or environmental damage.

**Colorado** The Boulder Valley School District bans the use of pesticides linked to health or environmental damage.

**Hawaii** Legislation banning PBDEs.

**Illinois** Pending legislation to ban pharmaceutical uses of lindane.

**Maine** Penta-BDE and Octa-BDE banned as of 2006. Deca-BDE banned as of 2008. Mercury is banned.

**Massachusetts** Pending legislation to find safer alternatives for ten hazardous chemicals, including PBDEs, DEHP, and some pesticides. Pending legislation to mandate the use of safer cleaning products in many public buildings. Legislation to require comprehensive toxics use reduction for large user segments. Boston passed a dioxin free purchasing resolution to avoid PVC use. MA state law bans the use in schools or daycares of pesticides that are considered known, likely, or probable carcinogens, inert ingredients with toxicological concerns, or any products used for purely aesthetic reasons. The law also limits use of pesticides indoors.

**Minnesota** Pending legislation to ban the herbicide, atrazine.

**Michigan** Legislation Banning Penta-BDE and Octa-BDE by 2006. Stakeholder Task Force on all Deca-BDE. PBDEs and mercury guidelines in state purchasing contracts.

**New York** Penta-BDE and Octa-BDE to be banned by 2006. Deca-BDE phase out for review. Pending legislation to ban pharmaceutical uses of the pesticide, lindane. PVC flooring is excluded as an eligible material for the state green building tax due to its release of harmful chemicals throughout its life cycle. NY's second largest city, Buffalo, passed a PBT-free purchasing resolution. At least five school districts, including NYC, have adopted policies that limit the use of pesticides for aesthetic purposes or ban some highly toxic pesticide categories.

**Oregon** Pending legislation in the 2005 Oregon Legislature to phase out the sale of products containing brominated flame retardants. Oregon's most populous county, Multnomah County, adopted the precautionary principle in 2004 to help reduce the use of toxic substances. Executive Order to achieve zero discharge of persistent chemicals by 2020. The Portland schools do not allow the use of known or likely carcinogens.

**Washington** Established a state program to phase out persistent bioaccumulative toxins under the Department of Ecology (PBT Program). Adopted a City of Seattle PBT-free purchasing policy. Passed mercury reduction legislation. Issued a Governor's Executive Order supporting PBT Program and calling for phase out of all PBDEs. Proposed legislation to ban all PBDEs (pending). Six school districts and four cities in WA banned the use of pesticides linked to health or environmental impacts.