

PRESS RELEASE



Banned toxics found in carpet underlay sold in EU

Brussels, 26 June 2011 - Discussion on the decision whether flame retardants, such as PBDE, can be used in products containing recycled materials (e.g., carpet underlay) is taking place now at COP5, the Stockholm Convention meeting on chemicals in Geneva.

Some flame retardants are banned in goods made from all new materials but not in goods made from recycled materials. Two years ago at COP4, the EU supported and strongly argued for an exemption that currently permits recycling of plastics and foam containing PBDEs.

These flame retardants can cause nervous system damage, particularly in infants and toddlers.

A new study shows that products available on the market in the EU do contain these toxics, posing a very real health concern. Samples of carpet underlay contain significant levels of flame retardant chemicals, PentaBDE and OctaBDE, according to the study of samples from countries around the world including Hungary and the US. PentaBDE and OctaBDE resemble PCBs in structure and toxic effects.

The press release and report from the International POPs Elimination Network (IPEN) can be found here ([COP5 Media page](#)).

At the COP5 meeting in Geneva is Joseph DiGangi, PhD, IPEN Sr. Science and Technical Advisor +1 510-710-0655 who can provide further information. For other contacts, see the [IPEN press release](#).

Lisette van Vliet, Toxics Policy Advisor, Health and Environment Alliance, says:

“We tend to think of recycling as a good thing. But this kind of recycling is exposing us to harmful chemicals, which may be adding to rates of cancer and thyroid disorders, and may be interfering with the healthy development of the brains of our children. We call on the European Union to urgently address the recycling of toxics loophole in this international agreement.”

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Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL) aims to raise awareness of how environmental protection and sustainability improves health and to empower the health community to contribute their expertise to policy making. Since its inception, HEAL's membership has grown to include a diverse network of more than 67 citizens', patients', women's, health professionals' and environmental organizations across Europe which together have a strong track record in increasing public and expert engagement in both EU debates and the decision-making process. Website: www.env-health.org

Chemicals Health Monitor Project (CHM) was launched by HEAL, CHEM Trust, Collaborative on Health and Environment and others in March 2007. It aims to improve public health by ensuring that key scientific evidence on the links between chemicals and ill-health are translated into policy as quickly as possible. Key documents about the campaign and information about the project can be found at: www.chemicalshealthmonitor.org