



The Alliance for a **HEALTHY TOMORROW**

262 Washington St. #301 • Boston, MA 02108 • ph 617.338.8131 • fax 617.338.6449
info@healthytomorrow.org • www.healthytomorrow.org

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FOR INFORMATION CONTACT:

Leise Jones, Alliance for a Healthy Tomorrow
(617) 338-8131 X204; ljones@cleanwater.org

Latest Toy Recall Has Advocates Calling for State Action

The recall by Fisher Price of nearly a million toys covered in lead paint highlights the lack of government oversight of toxic chemicals in toys and other children's products. This is not simply a problem coming from China; lead and other toxic chemicals are present in baby and children's products made in the US and elsewhere. And although some toxic toys are recalled, albeit after families bring them into their homes and children are exposed, millions of other toxic toys remain on store shelves, overlooked and unregulated by federal authorities.

Some facts:

- * In 2006, researchers found lead leaching from the linings inside vinyl lunch bags that were specifically marketed to toddlers.
- * In May 2007, Walmart recalled baby bibs that tested positive for high levels of lead.
- * In 2006, nearly 1 million pieces of children's jewelry were recalled due to high lead levels.
- * Scientific research has shown that cadmium, phthalates, Bisphenol-A and other toxic additives leach from plastic products, including baby bottles and baby toys. These additives are not only in paint on products, but are contained in materials such as vinyl, polycarbonate plastic, and other common materials.

How does this happen?

The Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) has no legal authority to test children's products before sale. Ensuring safety is the responsibility of the companies. Under the Consumer Products Safety Act, products with lead *paint* in excess of 0.06% lead or lead compounds are banned hazardous products, including toys and other articles intended for use by children. Much of the implementation of the Consumer Product Safety Act is done through guidance and voluntary agreements with manufacturers.

However, lead used in other materials, besides paint, does not have a standard and is not banned, such as lead in PVC (vinyl) products and lead in metal jewelry, even if the product is marketed to children and can expose the children to lead.

States are stepping in: What Massachusetts can do

A bill pending before the Massachusetts legislature targets lead and other toxic chemicals and creates a state program to require that companies replace toxic chemicals with safer alternatives. “An Act for a Healthy Massachusetts: Safer Alternatives to Toxic Chemicals” (H. 783 & S. 558) is sponsored by Rep. Jay Kaufman (Lexington) and Sen. Steven Tolman (Brighton). The bill would also require product distributors to disclose certain toxic chemicals in consumer products sold in Massachusetts.

Additionally, the state Department of Public Health has the authority to protect children from exposure to hazardous substances in products by prohibiting the sale of specific consumer products with toxic components while encouraging their replacement with the safer alternatives. This underutilized authority could greatly reduce the exposure of developing infants, children, and adults to toxic chemicals, while boosting the availability of safer products.

Interviews available with the following experts:

Joel Tickner ScD, Assistant Professor of Community Health and Sustainability at UMass Lowell

Senator Steven Tolman (D-Brighton), lead sponsor of the “Safer Alternatives Bill”

Lucia Dolan, mother of three from Newton

Representatives of the Massachusetts Breast Cancer Coalition, based in Quincy

Representatives of the Alliance for a Healthy Tomorrow, a statewide coalition of over 160 organizations working to protect public health from exposure to toxic chemicals. For more information visit www.healthytomorrow.org or call 617-338-8131 x204