



Alliance for a Clean and Healthy Maine

Environmental Health Strategy Center • Learning Disabilities Association of Maine • Maine Conservation Voters Education Fund • Maine Council of Churches • Maine Labor Group on Health • Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association • Maine People's Alliance • Maine Women's Policy Center • Natural Resources Council of Maine • Physicians for Social Responsibility-Maine Chapter • Toxics Action Center Campaigns

www.cleanandhealthyme.org

P.O. Box 2174, Augusta, ME 04338

Talking Points: Toxic Toys

January 9, 2008

THE PROBLEM: Dangerous Toxic Chemicals in Everyday Children's Products

- **Many consumer products, including toys, contain dangerous toxic chemicals.** The scientific evidence is growing daily that these chemicals are linked to reproductive problems, developmental and learning disabilities, hormone problems and cancer. They are found in products we use every day: plastic containers, toys, furniture, water bottles, medical supplies, and shampoo.
- **Children are particularly vulnerable to the harmful effects of toxic chemicals.** Babies and young children inevitably put toys in their mouths and near their noses. At a time when every part of them is still growing, children are exposed, pound for pound, to higher levels of these chemicals than adults.
- **There is virtually no government oversight on chemicals used to manufacture toys and other consumer products – even those made in the United States.** Lead-filled toys from China are just the tip of the iceberg. The U.S. Consumer Protection Agency has neither the power nor the funding to protect kids. At the same time the Toxics Substances Control Act is so complex and full of loopholes that it is virtually ineffective.
- **When it comes to getting good information, parents and consumers are left in the dark.** Chemical companies aren't required to test their chemicals and manufacturers aren't required to list the chemical components of their products.
- **Manufacturers and retailers of consumer products, including many small businesses in Maine, are stuck in the middle of a broken system.** With little government regulation and a chemical industry that will do everything it can to maintain the status quo, businesses are also left in the dark as to the materials and products they use and sell.

THE SOLUTION: A Roadmap to Keep Children Safe from Toxic Chemicals

- **Safer alternatives to many toxic chemicals already exist and should be substituted when they are available.** There are effective and affordable alternatives to many hazardous chemicals already in widespread use. It would be irresponsible not to use them. In recent testing of over 1,200 popular children's toys, 40% of the products tested did not contain any lead, cadmium, arsenic, mercury or PVC, including many made in China.
- **Policy change is an essential first step.** Because there is no adequate system in place to regulate or restrict these chemicals in toys made in the US or abroad, policy changes are needed to keep toxic chemicals out of toys and other children's products.
- **States can't wait for the federal government.** Because of federal inaction, states must pass legislation to make sure dangerous chemicals aren't used in toys and other children's products. Maine can join other states and the European Union through state purchasing practices and public policy development that reduce toxic chemicals in the system.
- **Information on toxic chemicals in toys and other children's products must be collected and shared.** We count on government to help parents protect their children. That means requiring chemical testing and reporting to businesses, consumers, and other government entities.
- **We don't have to choose between good health, a clean environment, and a strong economy.** In fact, they go hand in hand. Investing in research for safer alternatives is good for our health and good for Maine businesses. The recent "Potatoes to Plastic" project is an example of such a win-win opportunity.
- **We can't shop our way out of this problem.** Real change to protect children and the public health will only come when chemicals are tested and regulated so our kids aren't put at risk every time they pick up their favorite toy.