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**Thursday, September 4, 2008**

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**Young Children in U.S. Among World's  
Most Polluted With Fire Retardants**

*Toxic Compounds in Toddlers & Preschoolers 3x Higher Than in Moms*

WASHINGTON – In the first nationwide investigation of chemical fire retardants in parents and their children, Environmental Working Group (EWG) found that toddlers and pre-schoolers typically had 3 times more of the neurotoxic compounds in their blood as their mothers. The study suggests that U.S. children 1 to 4 years of age bear the heaviest burden of flame retardant pollution in the industrialized world.

Laboratory tests – conducted in collaboration with Dr. Åke Bergman, a preeminent environmental chemist – found that in 19 of 20 U.S. families, concentrations of the toxic chemicals known as PBDEs were significantly higher in 1- to 4-year-old children than in their mothers. The tests found the fire retardant Deca, banned in Europe but unregulated by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, more often and in higher amounts in U.S. children than their mothers.

“Current state and federal laws do not go far enough to protect children from dangerous toxic chemicals that harm their brains and reproductive systems. This study is proof that the government must act to end the chemical contamination of children,” said Kathleen Schuler, co-director of Healthy Legacy, a Minnesota coalition dedicated to safe products, made safely.

The Minnesota legislature passed a ban on deca by wide margins in both houses, only to be vetoed by Governor Tim Pawlenty. Representative Karen Clark (DFL- Minneapolis) and Senator Sandy Pappas (DFL-St. Paul) were the chief authors of last year’s deca legislation. Notably, Minnesota professional firefighters supported the deca ban. Tom Thornberg, president of the Minnesota Professional Fire Fighters, stated that firefighters were “convinced that phasing out the use of deca will not compromise fire safety in any way.”

The average levels of PBDEs in the blood of children tested by EWG were about 62 parts per billion, compared to 25 ppb in their mothers. In the limited number of studies of this age group in other countries, Spanish, Norwegian and Australian children had levels 2 to 15 times lower.

“It’s well documented that U.S. adults are more exposed to chemical fire retardants than in other countries, but these findings show that young children are at even higher risk,” said Anila Jacob, MD, EWG senior scientist and study co-author. “Parents want to protect their children, but once they are old enough to crawl or walk, they are more vulnerable to exposure from these and other toxic chemicals.”

Toxic fire retardants in everyday items like furniture, sofas, televisions and computers could expose children to concentrations exceeding the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s

recommended safe level. Children ingest more fire retardants and other toxins when they put their hands, toys and other objects in their mouths.

Children's developing brains and reproductive systems are extraordinarily vulnerable to toxic chemicals. In the case of PBDEs, laboratory tests in peer-reviewed studies have found that a single dose administered to mice on a day when the brain is growing rapidly can cause permanent changes to behavior, including hyperactivity.

"I was frustrated to learn that trying to do something good for my family, like getting a new couch, might actually do my family harm," said Minnesota participant and mother Christi Williams.

"I am extremely disturbed to see children have higher exposures than their mothers, especially at a time that they are more vulnerable to the toxic effects," said Dr. Åke Bergman.

Other moms and kids in the study were from California, Colorado, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Mexico, Oregon, Washington state and Washington, D.C.

Even as the chemical industry insists Deca is safe, the European Union has banned it from use, 10 U.S. states are considering or have enacted legislative bans, and major electronics manufacturers including Nokia, Sony-Ericsson and Samsung no longer use Deca and are phasing-out other bromine-based fire retardants.

**NOTE:** Moms and kids who participated in the study were from California, Connecticut, Colorado, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Montana, New Mexico, Oregon, Washington State and Washington, D.C. Mothers are available for comment, as are leading U.S. and international scientists.

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*EWG is a nonprofit research organization based in Washington, DC that uses the power of information to protect human health and the environment. The group's research on deca is available, please contact Lindsay Dahl 612.870.3458 (w). **Healthy Legacy is a Minnesota based coalition that is working to eliminate unnecessary exposures to toxic chemicals.***