

Winter 2007

Dear Governor Gregoire and Washington State Legislators:

We would like to invite you to share in our vision of a Washington that is free of harmful toxic chemicals. **As health professionals, we urge you to take an imperative step towards this goal, by eliminating all forms of polybrominated diphenyl ethers (PBDEs) through legislative action in the upcoming 2007 session.**

PBDEs, widely used as flame retardants, are linked to harmful health impacts, including learning and behavioral disorders, and memory impairments. PBDEs are associated with disruption of thyroid function, non-Hodgkin's lymphoma in humans, and a variety of cancers in rodentsⁱ. **Devastatingly, those most at risk are those who depend on us for protection: developing fetuses, infants and young children.**

A growing body of research indicates that PBDEs are building up in people's bodies, in animals, and in the environment. A recent study of ten Washingtonians found PBDEs present in every person tested. A Seattle physician, Dr. Patricia Dawson, had levels of PBDEs that were three times the national levelsⁱⁱ. PBDEs are also present in the breastmilk of Northwest mothers at levels 20 to 40 times higher than levels found in Europe or Japan. Recent studies show high concentrations of PBDEs throughout the Puget Sound food web, including in salmon and orca whales.

Ubiquitous exposures to PBDEs are magnified for some children by take-home contamination from parents occupationally exposed to PBDEs. This worker safety issue goes beyond the workplace, impacting not only the employee, but also infants, children and families.

New studies add to the body of evidence indicating that the deca-PBDE breaks down into other, more harmful forms of PBDEs that have already been banned. ***This debromination has been documented to occur not only in the environment, but also in our bodies.***

Prevention is the key. Though we cannot reverse the damage that has already been done to children who suffer from environmentally-linked birth defects and developmental disorders, we can prevent further harm and protect future generations by banning all forms of PBDEs, including deca.

Taking action now is vital for our children's health. Washington's major health associations support phasing out all forms of PBDEs, including deca, and encouraging safer alternative products and processes that maintain existing fire safety standards. These organizations include The Washington Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, The Washington State Medical Association, The Washington Academy of Family Physicians, The Washington State Nurses Association, The Washington State Public Health Association, and the Washington State Association of Occupational Health Nurses.

For the sake of the estimated 300,000 children in Washington who struggle with developmental, learning and behavioral abnormalities and for the sake of their families, we must act now to eliminate all forms of PBDEs. We have the science in hand to take action, and we must shoulder the responsibility to do so. Please **help protect our children** by supporting legislation to ban PBDEs, including deca, in the 2007 legislative session. Thank you for your time and attention to this pressing issue.

Sincerely,

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Note: This petition has been signed by individuals. Their views do not necessarily represent the organizations, agencies or institutions with which they are affiliated.

ⁱ Darnerud, P.O., et. al. Polybrominated Diphenyl Ethers: Occurrence, Dietary Exposure and Toxicology, Environmental Health Perspectives Journal 2001; 109 (Supplement 1) p. 49-68.

ⁱⁱSchreder, Erika, "Pollution in People: A Study of Toxic Chemicals in Washingtonians", May 2006.
www.pollutioninpeople.org