

The Business Case for Eliminating Harmful Chemicals from Products

Many businesses are at the leading edge of making products safer, more sustainable and free from harmful chemicals. Manufacturers are increasingly eliminating chemicals that cause cancer and environmental degradation from their products without sacrificing quality or safety. States are sending clear signals that they want products without harmful chemicals and businesses are demonstrating that meeting this demand is not only possible but profitable.

Chemicals of Concern in Products

- 1. Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs)**, used in adhesives, finishes, paint and coatings, can release vapors and are linked to increased risk for neurological issues, birth defects and cancer.
- 2. Flame retardant chemicals** used in furniture, mattresses, and children's products are not needed to meet fire safety standards and migrate out of products into air and dust. Flame retardants have been associated with endocrine disruption, neurological damage, birth defects and cancer.
- 3. Per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFASs)** are widely used for waterproofing and stain proofing in furniture, carpet and food packaging. PFASs have been detected in humans and have been associated with cancer, thyroid disruption and obesity.
- 4. Polyvinyl chloride (PVC)** or vinyl, is used in clothing, building materials, furniture and toys. The production and combustion of PVC emits dioxin, a potent carcinogen.
- 5. Antimicrobials** are often added to mattresses, upholstery, children's toys, clothing, and baby care items. Their use is associated with bacterial resistance and adverse effects on reproductive and respiratory health.



73% of small business owners support government regulation to ensure the products companies buy and sell are non-toxic.
<http://asbcouncil.org/toxic-chemicals-poll>.

Chemical Regulation and Ingredient Disclosure Support Responsible Businesses by:

- *Creating a level playing field* for businesses that choose to manufacture, distribute, and sell products that are free from harmful chemicals in competing with those businesses that are not choosing to factor human health and the environment into their business decisions.
- *Increasing ingredient disclosure* throughout the entire supply chain so that businesses have the information needed to choose which products to buy, use and sell to customers.
- *Supporting market expansion of responsible companies* that contribute to the growth of innovation of safer and greener products.



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The Power of Large Purchasers

Government agencies, higher education, health care, and large corporate purchasers are demanding that products they purchase be free of harmful chemicals.

Health Care and Corporate Purchasing

- Kaiser Permanente, Dignity Health and others are working toward Healthier Hospital goals, transitioning away from harmful chemicals in furniture.
- In 2016, sixty-six percent of the furniture purchased by University Hospitals in Ohio are free of formaldehyde, flame retardants, PFASs, PVC, and antimicrobials.
- Hackensack Meridian Health implemented a chemical purchasing policy that eliminates formaldehyde, PFASs, PVC, antimicrobials, and all flame retardants from furnishings.
- In 2017, 18 companies signed a pledge to purchase furniture free of many chemicals of concern, representing over \$100 million in purchasing power, including LinkedIn, Genentech, Pacific Gas & Electric, Partners HealthCare, Perkins + Will and others.

Government Purchasing

- The state of New York's furniture specifications restrict the use of key chemicals of concern, representing \$35 million in annual furniture purchasing power.
- The State of Connecticut restricted the use of flame retardants and VOCs in a recent classroom and systems furniture contract.
- The cities of Portland and San Francisco have restricted the use of key chemicals of concern in all furniture purchased.



Businesses Are Taking the Lead

- Ashley Furniture, IKEA, La-Z-Boy, Pottery Barn and Crate and Barrel, have all committed to exclusively providing furniture without flame retardant chemicals. IKEA and Crate and Barrel have also removed the use of fluorinated stain treatments.
- Lee Industries makes upholstery that is FR-free, uses recycled and non-petroleum-derived materials, low VOC finishes and certified sustainable forest materials.
- Naturepedic makes mattresses using organic cotton that are free of flame retardants, formaldehyde and other harmful chemicals, earning numerous safe product certifications, including from Made Safe, which certifies that products are free of chemicals known to be harmful to human health. ★

The “What’s It Made Of?” Initiative

Find out why nearly 400 retailers, designers, and manufacturers have signed a Pledge to ASK about harmful chemicals in the products they make, use and sell.

<https://sustainablefurnishings.org/content/whats-it-made-initiative>

For More Information



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