

CHEMIKAZE SHOPPING

Independent laboratory testing of consumer products in Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden show a high presence of hazardous chemicals in brand products. 'Not acceptable', say four leading Politicians from the region, who went shopping with Greenpeace. Mandatory substitution of hazardous substances with safe alternatives must be key principle in new EU rules.



Greenpeace Nordic, 7 November 2005

INTRODUCTION

When you shop you expect that the products on display in the shop are tested and safe to use. That is not presently the case, as this study shows. Some 100.000 different chemicals are used in the European Union. Most of these are NOT TESTED. Many substances are proven NOT SAFE but still allowed on the market, and many more are SUSPECTED to cause cancer, harm reproduction or damage learning abilities.

Within the next few weeks the European Parliament and the EU Governments will decide on a new set of chemical laws in the EU called REACH. This is a 'once-in-a-life-time' opportunity to create a European-wide system that can protect humans, wildlife and the environment from dangerous chemicals. The chemicals industry has launched a heavy attack to water down the scope of, and requirements within, REACH. Strong concerted political action from the highest level of Nordic governments is urgently needed to save REACH.

WHAT DID WE BUY?

We asked the participants of our shopping experiment to pick a variety of consumer products they would consider buying for themselves or their families. Then we went shopping together, buying a total of 24 products.



In Stockholm, Swedish environment minister, **Lena Sommestad**, had brought her daughter Anna and they went for some school gear, a SCAN mini radio and Cindy Crawford's *Waterfalls* perfume.

Finnish Green League party leader, **Tarja Cronberg**, set her eyes on a portable MP3/CD player from Philips, a *Nordic Mythology* sweatshirt, *Happy* perfume from Clinique and a school bag.



Pernille Blach Hansen, MP and environment spokesperson of the Danish Social Democrats, also bought perfume, but chose her personal favorite, *Allure* from Chanel. A Nintendo Game Boy, a pencil case and a *Justice League* pajamas also went into the basket.



Knut Arild Hareide, former environment minister of Norway, couldn't resist a Helly Hansen sweatshirt, speculating that a Norwegian company would be clean. Other picks from Hareide included a Batman drinking bottle, a Game Boy and school accessories.

WHAT DID WE FIND?

Greenpeace sent the purchased products for testing at a respected independent laboratory, Eurofins in Denmark. Eurofins detected chemicals that are toxic, persistent and bioaccumulative in most of the products. Eurofins tested for a total of 35 hazardous chemicals and found 19, including phthalates, brominated flame retardants, synthetic musks and heavy metals.

Consumer electronics

All the electronic products contained TBBPA, a brominated flame retardant suspected of having hormone disrupting effects. TBBPA was discovered in samples of umbilical cord blood earlier this year. The SCAN radio, bought in a BR toy store in Stockholm, contained five additional flame retardants including OctaBDE (banned in Sweden, 2004).

The hormone disrupting phthalate DEHP was found in the SCAN radio and Philips MP3/CD player, and the cables for both Game Boys contained DEHA and DINP/DIDP phthalates.



Perfumes

High concentrations of synthetic musk were found in all the perfumes, although one (*Waterfalls*) had a lower content of DPMI and no other varieties of synthetic musk. Galaxolide (HHCB) is the most used musk substance on the European market, and was also found to be the most dominant musk in this survey. HHCB has recently been detected in the blood of pregnant women (38 out of 42) as well as in umbilical cords (26 out of 27). All the perfumes contained phthalates, and *Happy* from Clinique was denatured with DEP. While testing slightly better on musks, *Waterfalls* from Cindy Crawford contained two types of phthalates (DBP and BBP) which are forbidden in perfumes.

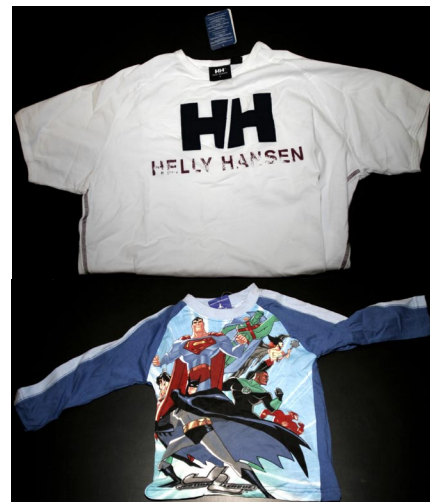


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Textiles

To the disappointment of Knut Arild Hareide, the sweat-shirt from Norwegian *Helly Hansen* did not come out clean. In fact, it was the worst textile tested. High levels of three phthalates banned in toys and childcare articles were found in the *Helly Hansen* product (DBP, BBP, DEHP). Two other textiles contained DBP, the *Justice League* pajamas and the *Nordic Mythology* sweatshirt, although the latter only in small quantities.

Textiles were also tested for heavy metals, and low levels of lead were found in the clothes bought in Denmark and Sweden, and the Finnish *Nordic Mythology* sweat-shirt had traces of cadmium.



Children's school accessories

The overall picture is clear: Nordic children are heavily exposed from school accessories such as pencil cases, drinking bottles and school bags to a range of substances classified as toxic to their reproduction.

The Batman plastic bottle bought in BR toy in Oslo won't create any new Batmans – 13% of the bottle is made of the hormone disrupting phthalate DEHP. DEHP was also found in high concentrations (2-23%) in the pencil cases. The schoolbags contained 5-20% DEHP and 3-11% DINP/DIDP as well as DBP. DEHP and DBP are forbidden in children's toys and childcare products, while DINP/DIDP is forbidden in the EU if the product is likely to be sucked on / played with by children below three years.



Brominated flame retardants

While their acute toxicity is considered to be low, chronic exposure (especially in the womb) to brominated flame retardants has been shown to interfere with brain and skeletal development in rats. This may in turn lead to permanent neurological effects.

Common metabolites of the PBDEs, as well as TBBP-A, are reported to interfere with the binding of thyroid hormones, increasing the potential for diverse effects on growth and development.

Studies have shown that TBBPA is capable of binding to oestrogen receptors and eliciting some estrogenic responses in human cell lines in vitro and vivo. This year a Greenpeace survey found TBBPA in the blood of nine out of 42 tested women and for the first time TBBPA was found in umbilical cord blood.

Artificial musks

Man-made musks have low acute toxicity, but due to insufficient data available, long-term effects are unknown. Some effects on reproductive and foetal development have been observed in rats, at higher levels. They are bio-accumulating and can be found in blood in pregnant women and umbilical cords.

Heavy metals

Exposure to lead can cause a range of effects, including anaemia and harm to the nervous and reproductive system and the kidneys. The impacts of lead upon the developing nervous system of children are of extreme concern, since a permanent lowering of IQ can result.

Cadmium is highly toxic to plants, animals and humans. It is toxic at very low levels of exposure, and has both acute and chronic effects on health and the environment. Cadmium is classified as a carcinogenic.

Phthalates

The main concern about phthalates such as DEHP, DBP and BBP is, that they have an anti-androgen effect. Exposure during pregnancy can effect the development of the testicles and sperm production.

Long term exposure of rats to the phthalate DINP led to increases in liver and kidney weight. It is possible that some phthalates can cause cancer - exposure to DEHP has been linked to liver cancer in rodents. DEHP, DBP and BBP are classified as toxic to reproduction in EU.

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HAZARDOUS CHEMICALS ON THE LOOSE

Analyses by Greenpeace over the past three years have contributed to the body of evidence demonstrating the widespread presence of hazardous chemicals in our environment and ourselves. Testing of eels and polar bears, house dust, rainwater, breast milk and human blood (including from umbilical cords) has confirmed their contamination with a diversity of hazardous chemicals.

Many of the substances have the potential to cause harmful effects in animals, such as disrupting hormonal functions, causing cancers, birth defects or harming reproduction, and can build up or persist in the environment, the food chain and in our own bodies. Exposure to hazardous chemicals places children at particular risk, given the chemical sensitivity of many fundamental development processes.

The Nordic chemical shopping basket survey shows possible sources of the widespread chemical contamination of humans and wildlife. Everyday products such as clothes, furniture, toys, radios should NOT leak toxics, and in the vast majority of cases, safe alternatives already exist.

We urgently need strong EU regulation to help us out of this chemical mess.

WHAT IS NEEDED TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM?

Greenpeace has been campaigning for better EU chemicals rules for years, and in this final stage of the REACH process we have narrowed down these top demands:

- 1) An authorization for the use of 'chemicals of very high concern' should only be granted if no safer alternatives are available and the use is essential to society. In the current proposal, hazardous chemicals are still allowed for use, even if there is a safe alternative.
- 2) In the latest version of the new regulation, 20,000 chemicals have been excluded from a proper safety assessment. Greenpeace demands that the principle of 'no data-no market' is sustained, and that all the data needed to identify potential health and environmental effects must be delivered by the industry for all substances covered by REACH.
- 3) A major aim of REACH is to ensure the flow of safety information on chemicals through the supply chain, but the Commission's proposal will prevent that flow of information as soon as a substance enters a product. In order to restore the faith of consumers in the safe use of chemicals, downstream users, retailers and ordinary consumers must have access to information about presence of hazardous chemicals.

NORDIC GOVERNMENTS CAN SAVE REACH IF THEY WANT TO

Nordic countries with their traditional emphasis on health and environmental protection are in a good position to campaign for a strong REACH. The environment ministers are ultimately responsible for cleaning up the chemical mess we live in, and they must take the lead to act NOW and ensure that:

- a) Nordic environment Ministers should initiate lobby effort towards their respective political groups (Conservative, Liberal, Socialist) in the European Parliament to convince these to vote according to key amendments agreed by the environment committee. Greenpeace also calls on the Swedish and Finnish environment ministers to follow the lead of their Danish colleague and join their industry Ministers in the 29 November EU council meeting, which will decide on a 'common position' on REACH.

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b) Nordic industrial Ministers should immediately contact the EU industrial commissioner, Günter Verheugen, and ask him to stop his attempts to weaken the registration phase of REACH. Seemingly campaigning on behalf of the German chemical industry, Verheugen wants to restrict the scope of REACH so only 6% of chemicals will be properly regulated.

c) Nordic environmental Ministers have announced a common alliance to push for a strong REACH, but have so far failed to put any substance into this. They must agree and publicly explain which common political initiatives they are launching to convince other governments, EU parliamentarians and the European Commission to support strong REACH legislation.

d) Nordic Prime Ministers working alongside each other need to persuade the new German government that also countries with a large chemical industry will ultimately benefit from strong EU chemical rules. The same message can be sent to Mr. Baroso, the head of the European Commission, who favours the industry line.

TELL ME MORE

The full laboratory report from Eurofins is available from Greenpeace

REACH info from the Greenpeace EU unit

<http://eu.greenpeace.org/issues/chem.html>

Greenpeace chemical investigations

<http://www.greenpeace.org/international/campaigns/toxics/chemicals-out-of-control>

Check out your chemical home

<http://www.greenpeace.org.uk/Products/Toxics/chemicalhouse.cfm>

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WHAT CAN I DO?

Send dirty products or your vacuum cleaner bag to your Environment Minister: Ask the Minister to take immediate action to insist on a strong EU chemicals law.

Upload a picture of yourself / your family and add your personal message to those Politicians that will decide on REACH in the next weeks at:

<http://www.chemicalreaction.org.uk/>

Support Greenpeace

http://www.greenpeace.org/international/supportus?appeal_id=167_105

The Greenpeace logo, featuring the word "GREENPEACE" in a bold, green, sans-serif font with a white outline.