



Hazardous Waste Management Program

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hazwastehelp.org

March 11, 2020

Cheryl Niemi
Hazardous Waste and Toxics Reduction Program
Washington State Department of Ecology
P.O. Box 47600
Olympia, WA 98504-7696

Dear Ms. Niemi:

The Hazardous Waste Management Program in King County (Haz Waste Program) would like to thank Washington State Dept. of Ecology (Ecology) for the opportunity to comment on Ecology's Draft Report on Priority Consumer Products (Draft Report).

The Haz Waste Program is a coalition of local governments comprised of King County, the City of Seattle, 37 other cities, and two tribes located in King County. Together we represent more than 2 million residents in the 13th most populous county in the United States. The Haz Waste Program works to protect and enhance public health and environmental quality by reducing the threat posed by the production, use, storage, and disposal of hazardous materials, many of which are found in common household products.

The Haz Waste Program supports Ecology's efforts to identify hazardous chemicals and products and then promote the adoption of safer alternatives. Safer Products for Washington law (Chapter 70.365 RCW) is consistent with the goals of the Haz Waste Program, and we look forward to collaborating with Ecology on any future work in the area.

We do not have technical comments on the Draft Report, except one overarching comment that the Draft Report needs increased focus on equity and social justice. We recommend that Ecology pay particular attention to the needs of our traditionally underserved and vulnerable populations. We encourage Ecology to engage our communities early and often – empowering them to participate in driving the process, rather than merely seeking their advice and input on Ecology's preconceived strategies.

We do have community comments that we would like to relay. On February 27, 2020, Ecology, Washington State Dept. of Health, the Haz Waste Program, and Public Health – Seattle & King County hosted a community event focused on the new Safer Products for Washington law.

The goal of the event was to engage community-based organizations on this new law, raise awareness of ongoing efforts, and gain feedback on the products selected for further investigation and potential regulation to reduce toxic chemical exposures in products in Washington state.

Though there were many themes of concern and interest to community groups at the event, three major areas of focus related to chemicals in products stood out as community priorities – public education and awareness, addressing equity and social justice with respect to products and toxics exposures, and engaging communities in the actions taken by government agencies around products in Washington.

Communities would like to receive more information about products and the toxic chemicals in them that will assist them when making product selections at the market, and would like to know what actions they can take to reduce their exposures to the toxics highlighted in Ecology's draft report while they wait for Ecology to evaluate the proposed products. The group also highlighted that choosing safer products is a privilege of those who can afford them, and this paradigm needs to change so that all communities have access to safer products. Participants at the event strongly requested that their organizations be engaged to inform the actions taken by government agencies in their efforts to reduce toxics in products.

We encourage Ecology to consider the comments below and move forward with community input as they enact this new law. Attached please find a list of the participating organizations and the input collected at the event categorized by themes and product categories.

The Haz Waste Program would like to thank you again for the opportunity to provide comments and to collaborate on the February 27, event. We look forward to future work on this important topic. If you have questions regarding the comments above, please do not hesitate to contact our toxicologist Dr. Steve Whittaker at steve.whittaker@kingcounty.gov or 206-263-8499.

Sincerely,



Lynda Ransley
Program Director
Hazardous Waste Management Program

Themed list of Community Comments

Safer Products for WA Event on 2/27/2020

Participating organizations

Attending Organizations

Names as provided on sign-in sheet:

- Refugee Federation Service Center
- Earth Ministry
- Toxics Free Future
- ECOSS
- Lao Khuc
- Vietnamese Friendship Association
- SCIDPDA
- Horn of Africa Services (HOAS)
- Indigenous Sister Resistance
- Children's Alliance
- Cham Refugees Community
- Latino Community Fund
- Na'ah Illahee Fund
- Capitol Hill Housing Association
- Unkitawa
- Seattle Infant Development Center
- Environmental Professionals of Color
- Living Well Kent
- Washington Environmental Council
- Indigenous Sister Resistance

Organizations present but not on sign-in sheet:

- King County Housing Association (KCHA)
- White Center Community Development Association (WCCDA)
- Chinese Information Center
- United Indians
- Seattle Indian Health Board
- Rainier Valley Core (RVC)

Comments Captured by Theme

Existing products

- Provide more information on products (health effects/alternatives)

- Existing products should be taken out of homes and businesses. If it's bad enough to ban, then it should be removed from the market.
- Please give community some safe actions to protect ourselves now while we wait for action on these products
- Products should be required to list known harms on the label or else remove the harmful chemicals from the product

Product Regulations

- Any regulations should apply to international food coming in (e.g., food can linings for imported canned foods and future chemicals where this could be an issue)
 - There are some foods that we use a lot in our culture – for example, coconut milk and certain fruits and vegetables.
- Alternatives must be provided when you regulate products.
- If we pull the chemicals what do we put in its place (if we pull a plant from land, what do we put on its place?)
- Manufactures are like children that pretends they don't know anything. No one ever calls them out or holds them accountable.
- We must fund the research and help companies. Don't see them as the enemies.
- Would like to see government help companies make safer products, manufacturer create jobs, incentives to do safer products. People worried about job impacts or industries shutting down.
- "incentivize those who manufacture safer alternatives"

Stakeholder Engagement

- This law is critical to clean up the supply chain. Must be implemented in the most powerful way. Washington can set the example and others can follow. Can we bring consumers to the table?

Education/Engagement

- Please give community some safe actions to protect ourselves now while we wait for action on these products
- Community groups want to educate their community leaders about these issues.
- Consumers shouldn't have to pick up a package and read it. In the meantime, educate.
 - I don't want to go to the store and spend 20 minutes looking at ingredients. It should be easy to identify. Those chemicals just shouldn't be in the product. They should be banned.
- When products are banned or regulated, Ecology should include in this process support for small businesses and consumers to make the change.
- We would like funding for CBOs to work with the communities to get information about these products. We don't want to wait for the regulations, we want the info now so we can make better decisions.
- People need to speak out. Get diligent about educating. We want to be healthy. Don't want to spend 20 minutes looking at the label. Protocol to penalize manufacturers that sell toxic stuff. Teach people how to responsible for the products they are producing.
- How do we use community to lift up and embrace? One community as a consumer. The power of education.

- We need to education, opportunities to build a collective voice.
- Community wants to know the names of products they should avoid (I explained that this law aims to avoid having to avoid specific products and instead remove harmful chemicals from them so you can feel safe buying them)

Environmental Justice and Equity

- It has become a luxury to buy healthy food, have the education, and not be exposed to toxic chemicals. It is a privilege. Our community eats whatever food you can get from the foodbank, puts in the cheapest carpets and replaces them every time you move into a new unit, and use bargain laundry detergent. We don't have the luxury to avoid these chemicals.
- We want to be healthy too.
- Power shift, luxury of time, money and education. Outside of chemical replacement, it is a structural shift. Ecology working with the folks who regulate housing. It is systematic.
- Is there a plan for 2nd hand materials? That is what low-income communities are buying... they should not have to be the repository for items that are more toxic and disposed of when others replace their items for safer ones.

Accessibility and Affordability

- Vouchers to help people switch
- Fresh bucks / clean bucks?
- Lower income, can't replace with better items. We need to do this top down – through laws and regulations. Low income people are too busy trying to figure out how to survive. We really need to address at a bigger higher level.
- Mislabeling
 - Fruit on packaging is misleading to non-English speaking community
 - Packaging can make it look like the products are healthy and safe

Environmental Effects

- We are concerned about any toxics that hit our waters, especially effecting salmon.
- We must think about the Orcas, salmons, waterways. Our Orca population is endangered. We can't have salmon people without salmon.
- Our rivers and wildlife do not have a voice. We need to be their voice.

Policy Actions

- Policy angle – clear desire of folks to testify.
- Would like to see government help companies make safer products, manufacturer create jobs, incentives to do safer products. People worried about job impacts or industries shutting down.

Product comments: (use/interaction with)

Electric and electronic equipment (device casings) (flame retardants)

- What are some basic precautions to take in order not to be exposed?
- What can people do now?
- What about cars? This law exempts them.

- What about spray insulation I buy at Home Depot? – There is already a safer alternative for insulation.
- TVs have greatest use in our house
- Bedding and clothing
- House insulation
- These need to be banned completely.
- What about products banned here, but then are bought from online sites such as AliBaba?
- What other products have flame retardants that aren't listed?
- Information on alternatives needs to be shared
- sofas and couches
- Computers

Printing inks (PCBs)

- Office staff who change toner
- Print shops
- We all use printed materials! The problem is we need to get this information to the community
- Contractors who remodel homes.
- Which inks contain PCBs?

Carpet (PFAS)

- PFAS – can we expand beyond carpet and consider upholstery and other home products?
- Carpets are expensive so we don't change them much
- Buddhism – we sit on the carpets during prayer
- Kids in childcare
- "I don't like cold hard floors, so I like having carpet"
- Sofas, rugs, and carpet mats
- My carpet is 30 years old and I'm not going to replace it as I've kept it clean.
- Nap mats for kids
- Crawling children
- People who remodel houses and other buildings

Aftermarket carpet treatments (PFAS)

- PFAS – can we expand beyond carpet and consider upholstery and other home products?
- House cleaning
- Scotchgard products to avoid stains
- Upholstery apparel, floor waxes and finishes are used
- Janitors
- My family cleans houses

Food cans (bisphenols)

- We should ban phenols in food cans and switch back to glass.
- Educate people to buy fresh products and fruit.
- Imported food cans should also have these chemicals banned from them (There are some foods that we use a lot in our culture – for example, coconut milk and certain fruits and vegetables.)

Laundry detergent (alkylphenol ethoxylates)

- Recommend a ban on detergents that contain these chemicals

- It is ironic that hospitals use phenol laundry detergent since they are promoting better health

Thermal paper (bisphenols)

- Receipt exposure: support small businesses to go paperless.
- Everyone who goes shopping gets a receipt
- Small business owners with restaurants or other retail would not want to wear gloves all day to avoid exposure. Going completely digital is not an option for some businesses.
- Digital receipts are not always an option for people who save receipts for tax purposes.

Vinyl flooring (phthalates)

- Public places w/ youth
- Low-income apartments

Fragrances in personal care and beauty products (phthalates)

- Include dryer sheets in fragrances
- Please go broader on fragrances (not just personal care products)
- Occupational exposures
- Makeup, nail salons, hair etc.
- Feminine products
- Scented diapers
- Scented garbage bags

Other chemicals to consider for future rounds:

- Put parabens in for the next round of chemicals
- Expand scope of existing products (e.g., fragrances) and do more on them in future rounds

Next Steps:

- How do we interface with the government and manufacturers? Manufacturers need to be at meetings, need to think about alternatives
- Educate the public, communicate with communities. That requires \$. Ask the state the county like to teach the community.
- Train the trainer model. Different ethnic groups and associations. Trade products. How to get to be affordable.
- Community health worker talks about safer cleaning products.
- People talk amongst themselves – if one family learns info, they relate it to other families (talking between families).
- They would like to support, would like to form a team to go to legislatures and to Olympia. (Horn of Africa gentleman said this and took Laurie Valeriano's business card.)
- What is next? What can we do now? We want to know safer alternatives now! We need concrete information now.
- Important to get to community. PowerPoint in different language
- Fund CBOs to get message out! Trickle the funds down. Don't want CBOs to get burned out
- Only banning 2 products from each class, need to do education on other products.