

Greening of Consumer Products

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California launches sweeping 'Green Chemistry' initiative

LA Times - Dec 17

California officials launched a sweeping green initiative to inform consumers exactly how hundreds of thousands of products sold in the state are manufactured and transported and how safe their ingredients are. The plan, which would require every product to reveal its "environmental footprint," envisions the most comprehensive regulations ever adopted for consumer goods. Maureen F. Gorsen, director of the California Department of Toxic Substances Control, said the administration would propose a law setting up a public database that could eventually allow consumers to scan a bar code on every product to determine how green it is -- or isn't.

California EPA releases final green chemistry framework

GreenBiz - Dec 18

The California Environmental Protection Agency (Cal/EPA) has developed a six-part framework for furthering the statewide Green Chemistry Initiative. Launched in April 2007 and leading to more than 800 ideas, the Green Chemistry Initiative is an effort to change how California approaches chemicals. The framework touches on evaluating chemicals, informing businesses about how to reduce toxins in products, bringing green chemistry to the classroom and educating businesses and consumers about what is in products and how those products have impacted the environment.

Toy industry says safety legislation could cause big problems

Washington Post - Dec 21

The \$22 billion toy industry is up in arms over consumer legislation in the U.S. designed to prevent toys and other products that contain lead and other dangerous chemicals from entering the marketplace. The law, which goes into effect Feb. 10, requires that manufacturers pay independent testing laboratories to verify the safety of products, and manufacturers say the law could wind up banning products that pose little or no safety threat and could halt the sale of bicycles.

National Research Council report advises cumulative risk assessment of phthalates

Environmental News Network - Dec 18

A new report from the National Research Council says The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency should examine whether combined exposures to phthalates could cause adverse health effects in humans, particularly to the male reproductive system. This analysis, called a cumulative risk assessment, is warranted, said the committee of scientists that wrote the report, if humans are exposed to multiple phthalates at any given time, and if sufficient evidence exists linking exposures to similar adverse health effects.

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Editor

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Report finds EPA veils dangerous-chemical filings

The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel - Dec 20

A review by the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel of more than 2,000 EPA filings on dangerous chemicals in the past three years found that in most cases, the agency allowed companies to keep the chemical name a secret, and in many cases, it allowed the company filing the report to keep its name and address confidential. Legal experts say that allowing the blacking out of such information violates the EPA's own law, which calls for public notice of any new information through the EPA program that monitors chemicals that pose a substantial risk.

Toyota plans carbon neutral interiors for 2009 cars

Business Green - Dec 18

Toyota says will turn to carbon-neutral, plant-based plastics for its car interiors, with a goal of using the materials for 60% of the interior components of selected cars. The company says its Ecological Plastics, which combine bioplastics and conventional petroleum-based plastics, are equal in quality to conventional plastics, and they will be used in a new hybrid vehicle coming out next year.

Future toys could be made from renewable liquid wood

GreenBiz - Dec 17

A sustainable bioplastic called ARBOFORM or "liquid wood" could make future toys more sustainable. This "liquid wood" mixes lignin with natural fibers made of wood, hemp, flax, and natural additives like wax. The combination produces a plastic granulate that can be melted and injection-molded into your child's favorite action figure. The latest incarnation of ARBOFORM contains minimal amounts of sulfur— a key point for toys, because sulfur smells unpleasant. And while sulfur-free lignins are usually water-soluble, the ARBOFORM scientists managed to modify their product so that it can survive contact with saliva and water. ARBOFORM is also completely recyclable.