Focus on: The Pollution Prevention for Healthy People and Puget Sound Act

Preventing exposure to toxic chemicals
We all benefit from the convenience and services of consumer products. But those products shouldn’t harm us, our kids, or our environment.

Consumer products can contain toxic chemicals. The chemicals in these products can get into household dust, food, water, sediments, our children, and wildlife, such as salmon and orcas. This can happen during use or after disposal. Chemicals are released when carpets and couches wear down, when building caulk degrades, and even when we wash our clothes.

In our state, millions of dollars have been spent removing toxics from contaminated water bodies, yet some fish are still unsafe to eat and sensitive species like our orcas continue to dwindle due, in part, to chemical contamination.

Better health and environmental protection in Washington
The Pollution Prevention for Healthy People and Puget Sound Act of 2019 makes consumer products safer for our families and our environment. It marks a major milestone for how we address chemicals in everyday products.

The law builds off the Departments of Ecology’s and Health’s successful collaboration developing chemical action plans1 and implementing the Children’s Safe Products Act (CSPA).2 It provides a better way for Ecology to reduce the impact and cost of dealing with toxics in products through a regulatory structure and systematic approach. We can now:

- Focus on preventing toxic chemicals from reaching people and the environment, rather than just cleaning up the mess afterwards.
- Regulate the use of toxic chemicals in consumer products through rulemaking.
- Consider chemical classes in regulatory decision-making when there is strong evidence to do so.

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1 Find chemical action plans for flame retardants, polychlorinated biphenyls, per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances at ecology.wa.gov.
2 ecology.wa.gov/cspa
What happens next?
Under this new law, Ecology will work with stakeholders, report to the legislature, and do the following four things on a repeating, five-year cycle:

- Identify at least 5 priority chemicals based on hazard, exposure, and impacts.

  The 5 priority chemicals identified for 2019 are:
  - Phthalates
  - Phenolic compounds
  - Polychlorinated biphenyls (PCB)
  - Organohalogen flame retardants
  - Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS)

- Identify consumer products containing those 5 priority chemicals.
- Identify safer alternatives that can be used in place of those 5 priority chemicals.
- Adopt rules, if necessary, to regulate the use of those 5 priority chemicals (such as reporting or restrictions).

Ecology and Health will use a data-driven, transparent process that relies on scientific evidence to identify priority chemicals and products. We will also develop a stakeholder process to ensure interested parties have the opportunity to provide input on priority chemicals, product identification, as well as rulemaking. Implementation of this act will build on our investment to support innovations and promote development of safer alternatives to toxic chemicals.

More information:
Bill as passed by the legislature:
- Pollution Prevention for Healthy People and Puget Sound Act (PDF) ³

Chemical Action Plans:
- Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances ⁴
- Flame Retardants ⁵
- Polychlorinated Biphenyls ⁶

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³ bit.ly/bill5135
⁴ ecology.wa.gov/PFAS
⁵ ecology.wa.gov/Waste-Toxics/Reducing-toxic-chemicals/Addressing-priority-toxic-chemicals/PBDE
⁶ ecology.wa.gov/PCBS