



# Focus on Washington State's PBDE ban

From the Washington Department of Ecology

## Background

In the 2007 session, the Washington Legislature passed ESHB 1024, banning Polybrominated Diphenylethers, or PBDEs, in a number of consumer products.

PBDEs have been widely used over the past 30 years as chemical flame retardants added to the plastics used in many household products such as furniture, computers and televisions so that the products will not catch on fire or will burn more slowly.

However, a number of studies showed that PBDEs were escaping from these products and entering the environment worldwide. PBDEs were found in human breast milk, house dust and indoor air, wildlife (including marine mammals, fish and birds) beef, dairy products and sediments.

Studies in laboratory animals show that PBDEs can damage the developing brain, affecting behavior, learning and memory. These effects can be permanent and recent animal studies show they may worsen with age.

Studies also show that levels of PBDEs in people are doubling every five years and people in North America have the highest levels in the world. In fact, based on limited human testing, PBDEs in humans are approaching the levels that cause harm in animals.

The bill was the first in the nation to specifically ban the commercial PBDE mixture known as Deca. The two other commercially sold PBDE mixtures, called Penta and Octa, are no longer in production in the United States. The Department of Ecology (Ecology) and the Department of Health (Health) are the lead agencies for carrying out the provisions of the bill.

## Phasing in the Ban

Beginning January 1, 2008, the manufacture, distribution or sale of mattresses made with Deca is prohibited. Manufacturers of such mattresses are required to recall the products and reimburse the retailer or purchaser. Ecology can fine manufacturers who ignore the ban. In April and again in August, 2007, Ecology notified Washington mattress manufacturers about the upcoming ban.

In addition, the following items are also banned if they contain Deca:

- Residential upholstered furniture
- Televisions
- Computers

The ban on these items will take effect after Ecology, Health, and a committee of fire-safety experts finds an effective alternative flame retardant. A report on available alternatives is due by December 31, 2008. If safe and effective alternatives are found by that date, the ban of these other products will go into effect on January 1, 2011.

Contact Carol Kraege 360-407-6906 [ckra461@ecy.wa.gov](mailto:ckra461@ecy.wa.gov).

*If you need this publication in an alternate format, please call the Solid Waste and Financial Assistance Program at (360) 407-6000. Persons with hearing loss can call 711 for Washington Relay Service. Persons with a speech disability can call 877-833-6341.*