

San Antonio Statement on Brominated and Chlorinated Flame Retardants

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The authors declare they have no actual or potential competing financial interests.

The statement is signed by the individual scientists and other professionals listed separately below. Please note that the views expressed are those of the authors and signatories; institutional affiliations are provided for identification purposes only. Abbreviations and an Annotated Statement are available as Supplemental Material (doi:10.1289/ehp.1003089).

We, scientists from a variety of disciplines, declare the following:

1. Parties to the Stockholm Convention have taken action on three brominated flame retardants that have been listed in the treaty for global elimination. These substances include components of commercial pentabromodiphenyl ether and commercial octabromodiphenyl ether, along with hexabromobiphenyl. Another brominated flame retardant, hexabromocyclododecane, is under evaluation.
2. Many commonly used brominated and chlorinated flame retardants can undergo long-range environmental transport.
3. Many brominated and chlorinated flame retardants appear to be persistent and bioaccumulative, resulting in food chain contamination, including human milk.
4. Many brominated and chlorinated flame retardants lack adequate toxicity information, but the available data raise concerns.
5. Many different types of brominated and chlorinated flame retardants have been incorporated into products even though comprehensive toxicological information is lacking.
6. Brominated and chlorinated flame retardants present in a variety of products are released to the indoor and outdoor environments.
7. Near-end-of-life and end-of-life electrical and electronic products are a growing concern as a result of dumping in developing countries, which results in the illegal transboundary movement of their hazardous constituents. These include brominated and chlorinated flame retardants.
8. There is a lack of capacity to handle electronic waste in an environmentally sound manner in almost all developing countries and countries with economies in transition, leading to the release of hazardous substances that cause harm to human health and the environment. These substances include brominated and chlorinated flame retardants.
9. Brominated and chlorinated flame retardants can increase fire toxicity, but their overall benefit in improving fire safety has not been proven.
10. When brominated and chlorinated flame retardants burn, highly toxic dioxins and furans are formed.

Therefore, these data support the following:

11. Brominated and chlorinated flame retardants as classes of substances are a concern for persistence, bioaccumulation, long-range transport, and toxicity.
12. There is a need to improve the availability of and access to information on brominated and chlorinated flame retardants and other chemicals in products in the supply chain and throughout each product's life cycle.
13. Consumers can play a role in the adoption of alternatives to harmful flame retardants if they are made aware of the presence of the substances, for example, through product labeling.
14. The process of identifying alternatives to flame retardants should include not only alternative chemicals but also innovative changes in the design of products, industrial processes, and other practices that do not require the use of any flame retardant.
15. Efforts should be made to ensure that current and alternative chemical flame retardants do not have hazardous properties, such as mutagenicity and carcinogenicity, or adverse effects on the reproductive, developmental, endocrine, immune, or nervous systems.
16. When seeking exemptions for certain applications of flame retardants, the party requesting the exemption should supply some information indicating why the exemption is technically or scientifically necessary and why potential alternatives are not technically or scientifically viable; a description of potential alternative processes, products, materials, or systems that eliminate the need for the chemical; and a list of sources researched.
17. Wastes containing flame retardants with persistent organic pollutant (POP) characteristics, including products and articles, should be disposed of in such a way that the POP content is destroyed or irreversibly transformed so that they do not exhibit the characteristics of POPs.
18. Flame retardants with POP characteristics should not be permitted to be subjected to disposal operations that may lead to recovery, recycling, reclamation, direct reuse, or alternative uses of the substances.
19. Wastes containing flame retardants with POP properties should not be transported across international boundaries unless it is for disposal in such a way that the POP content is destroyed or irreversibly transformed.
20. It is important to consider product stewardship and extended producer responsibility aspects in the life-cycle management of products containing flame retardants with POP properties, including electronic and electrical products.

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NOTE: The competing financial interest declaration was not included in this editorial published in the December issue of *Environmental Health Perspectives*; the statements is provided below.

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This omission has been corrected in the PDF version of this article.