

News from the Alaska State Legislature, the Office of Senator Olson
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Senator Olson Introduces “Toxic-Free Children Act” to Protect Alaskans

Senate Bill 151 bans the sale of children’s products with certain toxic flame retardants

JUNEAU- Senator Donny Olson, D-Golovin, has introduced Senate Bill 151, the “Toxic-Free Children Act”. SB151 bans the sale of children’s products containing toxic flame retardants known as “Tris.”

“Children are Alaska’s most precious resource. From the point of conception through the first years of development, they are especially vulnerable to the effects of exposure to toxic chemicals,” said Senator Olson. “Alaskans know well the devastating impacts of fetal alcohol exposure and it is 100 percent preventable if a woman does not drink alcohol during pregnancy. Protecting developing children from exposure to toxic chemicals is not as simple.”

Many furniture and baby product manufacturers integrate Tris flame retardants into their products because of flammability standards at state and federal levels. The products include nursing pillows, strollers, changing table pads, car seats, baby carriers and high chair pads. Overtime, Tris escapes from the foam and mixes with dust in homes. The dust lands on household surfaces, including toys and food, and some of it is ingested.

Young children are the most likely to be exposed because of their tendency to put toys and their hands into their mouths.

“Exposure to these chemicals is associated with cancer, learning disabilities, and reproductive problems, all of which are alarmingly common in Alaska,” said Maricarmen Cruz Guilloty, Environmental Health and Justice Coordinator for the Alaska Community Action on Toxics. “We must do whatever we can to protect vulnerable populations, especially children, from toxic chemicals. Legislation such as the Toxic-Free Children’s Act is long overdue in Alaska.”

In the 1970s, manufacturers added the flame retardant chemical TDCP, also known as “chlorinated tris,” (one form of “Tris” flame retardants) to children’s sleepwear. They stopped adding it in 1977 after the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission determined Tris to be a probable

human carcinogen. However, to this day, because the Commission did not specify any other products, manufacturers continue to add chemical variations of the toxic chemical 'Tris' to baby nursery items, strollers, and nursing pillows. Both New York and Vermont have passed laws banning Tris from children's products.

Senate Bill 151 bill gives the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) the authority to prohibit the use of 'Tris' and other toxic flame retardants and establishes a list of chemicals that are of special concern for children's health. It will also move Alaska a step forward towards protecting people from a variety of harmful chemicals by allowing the DEC to participate with other states in learning about and sharing information on chemicals of concern.

"Developing babies and infants are at particular risk as these accumulated toxics are transferred from mother to child in utero and through breast milk. Pre-natal exposure may have lifelong health impacts that are not manifested until decades later," said Senator Olson. "Alaska must join other states in stepping forward to protect citizens without delay in the face of federal inaction."

"We support the Toxic-Free Children's Act because we believe that people, especially children, should be protected from toxic chemicals. Fire fighters have a higher risk of cancer because of exposure to toxic chemicals such as flame retardants," said Jeff Tucker from the Alaska Fire Chiefs Association.

"These harmful chemicals should not be used in common everyday products, much less in baby products. There are many ways to achieve fire safety without toxic chemicals, including the use of smoke alarms, sprinkler systems, fire building codes, and fire safety education."

SB151 now heads to the Senate Health and Social Services Committee for further consideration.

For more information, please contact David Scott in Senator Olson's office at 907-465-3707.