Citizens for Fire Safety EXPOSED

A Chemical Industry Front Group for Manufacturers of Toxic Flame Retardants (PBDEs)

Front group \ FRUHNT groop \ *n* **:** An organization that purports to be independent voluntary association or charitable organization, but actually serves the interest of the sponsoring party whose identity is often hidden. Certain front groups are seemingly grassroots-based coalitions that are actually funded by an industry trade association or public relations firm.

PBDEs are polybrominated diphenyl ethers, toxic flame retardants added to products such as televisions, computers, textiles, building materials, infant car seats and strollers. Laboratory studies show that PBDEs may harm the developing brain, impair sperm development, and impair thyroid function.[1,2,3] Washington State and Maine have banned three of the most widely used PBDEs and many states are considering following suit, based upon evidence that these chemicals are persistent, bioaccumulative and toxic.[4] Chemical manufacturers of PBDEs have a direct financial interest in preventing limits on the use of their product. They have organized themselves to oppose policies to require non-toxic fire safety through PBDE restrictions that are advancing across the U.S.

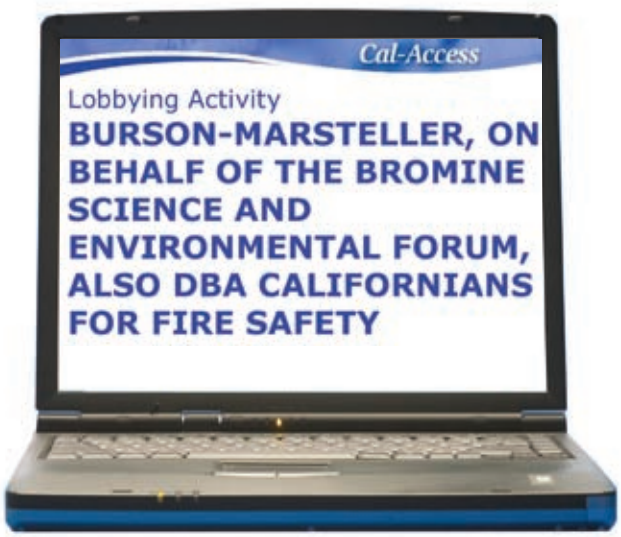
The Industry Players

Four principal corporations that manufacture PBDEs are Albemarle, Israel Chemicals Limited (ICL), Chemtura, and Tosoh. When they saw that some of their flame retardant products were coming under regulatory pressure, they contracted with Burson-Marsteller, the giant global public relations firm, to change public and legislative perceptions about the hazards associated with PBDEs. Burson-Marsteller represents major chemical and oil companies such as Exxon-Mobil and Monsanto, as well as controversial businesses such as Blackwater and foreign military juntas.[5] Burson-Marsteller also represented Union Carbide, whose facility in India was responsible for the Bhopal Disaster.[6] It helped organize the Bromine Science and Environmental Forum (BSEF), as the neutral-sounding public relations arm of the four principle PBDE-producing companies. Lawrie McLaren, the BSEF Program Director,[7] is also European Practice Leader Public Affairs for Burson-Marsteller.[8]

In Burson-Marsteller, PBDE manufacturers picked a partner with vast experience in creating and managing front groups. Previously, Burson-Marsteller created the "National Smoker's Alliance" as a front group for the tobacco industry to fight against Clean Indoor Air acts and other anti-smoking legislative initiatives.[9] In Europe, the Merck pharmaceutical company engaged Burson-Marsteller to create a so-called "Coalition to Prevent Deep-Vein Thrombosis"[10] to market a product for that condition, and the star-studded "European Women for HPV Testing" was set up for the company that made the HPV tests.[11]

Front Group Formed: Citizens for Fire Safety

Just as in other campaigns to promote and defend its bottom line, industry has developed a strategy relying on a front group called "Citizens for Fire Safety" (CFFS) to campaign against state legislative initiatives regulating PBDE flame retardants, while attempting to influence state regulatory policy either by lobbying directly or paying firms who also lobby for the American Chemistry Council (ACC), Albemarle, Chemtura or BSEF. CFFS has formed "chapters" in a number of states where it actively lobbies, including Connecticut, Illinois, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts and Minnesota. In California, a related organization called "Californians for Fire Safety" was created by the public relations consulting firm Jacobson Communications, and is explicitly listed on the lobbyist registration website. "Burson-Marsteller, on behalf of the Bromine Science and Environmental Forum, Doing Business As Californians for Fire Safety," spent $6,673,215.90 over the 4 quarters at the start of the



2007–2008 legislative session. It terminated its lobbying firms at the end of January 2008, and those firms picked up Citizens for Fire Safety Institute on Feb 1, 2008.[12]

Citizens for Fire Safety – Truth in Advertising?

Citizens for Fire Safety[13] describes itself as "… a coalition of fire professionals, educators, burn centers, doctors, fire departments and industry leaders…" but in fact is moving a special interest corporate agenda for a handful of actors. The primary purpose of CFFS is to work at the behest of PBDE manufacturers to defeat legislative initiatives calling for the prohibition of PBDE flame retardants. CFFS builds its membership list by attracting the support of organizations

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REAL PEOPLE FIGHT BACK:
Firefighters and Health Professionals Support Non-Toxic Fire Safety

The following organizations support phasing out PBDEs because of the health threats they pose and the availability of safer, effective fire protection methods.

- American Academy of Pediatrics – Maine Chapter
- American Academy of Pediatrics (Michigan Chapter)
- American Academy of Pediatrics District 2
- American College of Nurse Midwives, Region 1, Chapter 1
- American Nurses Association—Maine Chapter
- Amherst Health Department
- Associated Fire Fighters of Illinois
- Association of Comparative & Environmental Toxicology Students
- California Professional Firefighters
- Center for Children's Health and the Environment, Mount Sinai School of Medicine
- Columbia Center for Children's Environmental Health
- CT Association of Directors of Health (CADH)
- CT Association of Public Health Nurses (CAPHN)
- CT Association of School Nurses
- CT Nurses Association (CNA)
- CT Public Health Association (CPHA)
- Firemen's Association of the State of New York
- Greater Boston Physicians for Social Responsibility
- Illinois Fire Fighters Association
- Institute for Health and the Environment, University at Albany School of Public Health
- Institute of Neurotoxicology and Neurological Disorders
- Maine Fire Chiefs
- Maine Fire Commission
- Maine Public Health Association
- Maine State Fire Marshall
- Massachusetts Association of Registered Nurses
- Massachusetts Nurses Association
- Michigan Association of Fire Chiefs
- Michigan Nurses Association
- Michigan Professional Fire Fighters Union
- Minnesota Nurses Association
- Minnesota Professional Fire Fighters
- Minnesota Public Health Association
- New York State Nurses Association
- Nursing Program, University of Washington,Tacoma
- Physicians for Social Responsibility—Los Angeles
- Physicians for Social Responsibility—Maine Chapter
- Planned Parenthood Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota
- Professional Firefighters of Maine
- San Francisco Medical Society
- Student Nurses Association, Endicott College
- Uniformed Professional Firefighters Association of Connecticut
- Washington Physicians for Social Responsibility (WPSR)
- Washington State Association of Fire Chiefs
- Washington State Council of Fire Fighters
- Washington State Nurses Association (WSNA)

Coming Soon to a Statehouse Near You – Key Personnel

"Time and time again, I've seen good bills die because we are overwhelmed with corporate lobbyists. There are a finite number of us, and an increasing number of them. We're outgunned and outnumbered when it comes to passing policies to protect the environment and public health."

—Maryland State Delegate James W. Hubbard, President, National Caucus of Environmental Legislators

Kelley Cawthorne

In Michigan, CFFS hired the firm of Kelley Cawthorne, which retains several lobbyists, including David Ladd, once a staffer in former Governor John Engler's administration. Engler came under fire while in office for not holding Dow Chemical (another ACC member) accountable for dioxin and other contamination in Michigan. Dennis Cawthorne himself was in Engler's administration, and is currently active in Michigan politics.

Grant Gillham

Grant Gillman is the signatory to state lobbying forms for CFFS. Gillham is a former employee of R.J. Reynolds who also worked for lobbyist Joe Schumate under contract with the tobacco industry. Grant Gillham has said he is working in "15-20" state legislatures. Featured on CFFS's website are notices about:

- Alaska HB 271
- Maryland HB 1
- Maine LD 2048 (signed into public law April 15, 2007)
- Illinois HB 298 (now 1421)
- Minnesota HB 934
- Connecticut HB 5805

Seth Jacobson

Seth Jacobson, through his public relations firm Jacobson Communications, developed Californians for Fire Safety, which used false and misleading information to defeat AB 706, a bill to protect people from chlorinated and brominated flame retardants including PBDEs. Prior to creating Californians for Fire Safety, Jacobson created "Santa Monicans for Sensible Priorities" and "Santa Monicans for Change," an effort funded by hotel business interests. According to campaign documents, ET Whitehall Seascape LLC and Edward Thomas Management Co. (Casa Del Mar and the Shutters Hotels) made payments to SMSP for "public relations and consulting work," designed to gain control of city government. Prior to that, Jacobson was a spokesperson for "Fighting Against Irresponsible Regulation (FAIR), an anti-living wage group that was widely criticized for distributing false and misleading election mailers.[15]

George A. Morris

George Morris is Hawaii's chief lobbyist for CFFS. Morris is also the major lobbyist for the American Chemistry Council.

Laura Ruiz

Laura Ruiz is Albemarle's Corporate Director for Consumer Advocacy. She gives testimony opposing controls on PBDEs on behalf of CFFS at legislative hearings. She also signed a letter to California State Senator Ridley-Thomas opposing AB 706 as the Chair of the American Fire Safety Council in 2007.[16]

Peter Sparber

Peter Sparber is BSEF liaison and public relations specialist of Sparber and Associates. He was formerly a vice president at the Tobacco Institute, which supported fire experts to address other problems and deflected attention from the effort to make cigarettes more fire-safe. Cigarettes are a major source of house fires. BSEF supported tactics to oppose fire safe cigarettes, because reducing cigarette-caused fires would reduce the risk for fires, which would also reduce the market share for their flame retardant products.[17] Sparber devised the concept of creating fake grassroots groups to front tobacco industry lobbying objectives.[18]

Personnel in Connecticut

In Connecticut, many lobbying firms work to oppose legislation that restricts PBDEs. BSEF is represented by Hughes & Cronin Public Affairs Strategies. Albemarle Equity, a subsidiary of Albemarle Corporation, is represented by M.P. Guinan Associates. Citizens for Fire Safety Institute, (another name for CFFS), is represented by Capitol Strategies Group, which specializes in brokering deals between corporations and government. It has offices in Connecticut, Texas, Florida, New York and California.

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and individuals who may be unaware of its chemical industry motives by using misrepresentation of what a given proposed policy would accomplish.[14] The front group seeks to blunt the rising influence of actual citizen coalitions—of environmental health and justice communities working with physicians, "moms" groups, firefighters, children's health advocates and others—that have formed to support restricting brominated flame retardants, due to the environmental and public health concerns they pose, and the ready availability of safer, cost- and performance-effective alternatives.

Often the public face of CFFS is not what it appears to be. Sometimes, PBDEs manufacturers present themselves in public hearings as representatives of CFFS. For example, at a Minnesota hearing on brominated flame retardants, Ms. Laura Ruiz entered herself into testimony as being from CFFS, although she is Albemarle's Corporate Director for Consumer Advocacy. Albemarle is a founding member of BSEF.

The funding for CFFS is not described on their website. Although CFFS presents itself as a grassroots group, it does not appear to solicit funding from the communities it purports to represent. However, it spends significant resources to defeat legislation restricting flame retardants. For example, in California, CFFS reported spending $190,740.06 for the 2007–2008 legislative season with professional state lobbyists, who also lobby for Californians for Fire Safety (see above), the American Chemistry Council (which includes the four BSEF bromine corporations), the Bromine Science and Environmental Forum (BSEF), Albemarle and Chemtura. CFFS pays lobbying firms in California, Colorado, Connecticut, Hawaii, Illinois, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Mississippi, New York, Texas, and Vermont. Another member of the ACC, ExxonMobil, lobbies for "fire safety" in New York.

Toxic Flame Retardants Hurt Firefighters

BSEF/Burson-Marstellar/CFFS has tried very hard to get firefighters to join their campaign. Their main strategy has been to get politically appointed fire and insurance commissioners on board. But the International Association of Firefighters, the organization which represents career firefighters in the U.S. and Canada, fully understands the risks posed by brominated flame retardants. Firefighters in Canada and in every state where bills restricting PBDEs have been introduced have gone on record to support those restrictions.

Firefighters have good reason to act in their own interests: In November 2006, the Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine published an analysis of 32 studies that found that fire fighters have significantly elevated rates of four types of cancer: multiple myeloma, non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, prostate, and testicular cancer, likely resulting from chemical exposures.[19]

In a recent letter to the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) signers representing many firefighter and other related organizations protested the industry push for adding brominated flame retardants to the television casing standards, including:

- International Association of Fire Fighters, Washington, D.C.
- John F. Hanley, San Francisco Fire Fighters Local 798,
- Tony Stefani, Executive Director and Founder San Francisco Firefighters Cancer Prevention Foundation
- Bob Shewbrooks, President, Hospital Fire Marshals Association, Philadelphia, PA
- Andrew McGuire, Executive Director Trauma Foundation, San Francisco General Hospital
- Elizabeth McLoughlin, Associate Director Ret.,Trauma Foundation, San Francisco General Hospital
- Peter A. Brigham, Founding and Emeritus Board Member, Federation of Burn Foundations.

In the letter, they state: "While the fire risk is very low, the health risk, especially for fire fighters, is very high. The proposed standard would lead to considerable levels of fire retardant chemicals in plastic TV housings. When these fire retardant chemicals burn, large amounts of toxic and cancer-causing brominated dioxins and furans can form. These combustion products present a significant health hazard for fire fighters…. The accumulation and health problems from the fire retardant chemicals, especially to fire fighters, have been documented in many dozens of peer-reviewed scientific research papers."[20]

This letter and others like it successfully defeated attempts by the chemical industry to mandate brominated flame retardants in the IEC television casing standard.

Conclusion

Everyone agrees we must protect people from fires, and do what we can to prevent them. Fortunately, we do not need to make the false choice between toxic chemical exposure and fire safety. If past is prologue, we can expect that this will not be the last front group the bromine industry uses to obscure its motives, manipulate public opinion and disrupt proposed legislative action. While the bromine industry attempts to use front groups like Citizens for Fire Safety to legitimize their profit-driven agenda, fire fighters, health professionals and truly grassroots organizations are taking a stand to protect people from fires *and* protect their health.

ENDNOTES

1 Eriksson P, Jakobsson E, Fredriksson A. 2001. Brominated flame retardants: A novel class of developmental neurotoxicants in our environment? Environmental Health Perspectives 109(9):903-908.

2 Kuriyama SN, Talsness CE, Grote K, Chahoud I. 2005. Developmental exposure to low-dose PBDE-99: Effects on male fertility and neurobehavior in rat offspring. Environmental Health Perspectives 13(2):149-154.

3 Lilienthal, Hellmuth, et al. 2006. Effects of developmental exposure to 2,2',4,4',5-pentabromodiphenyl ether (PBDE-99) on sex steroids, sexual development, and sexually dimorphic behavior in rats. Environmental Health Perspectives 114(2):194-201.

4 Maine Department of Environmental Protection, Center for Disease Control. 2007. *Brominated Flame Retardants,* Third annual report to the Maine Legislature. www.maine.gov/dep/rwm/publications/legislativereports/pdf/finalrptjan07.pdf

5 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Burson-Marsteller

6 Ibid.

7 As listed on their website, http://www.bsef.com/contact/, as of 9/12/08

8 As listed on their website, http://www.burson-marsteller.com/About_Us/Regional_Leadership/Pages/Europe_Africa.aspx, as of 9/12/08

9 http://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php?title=Burson-Marsteller_and_the_National_Smokers_Alliance

10 Barnett, Antony. 2004. Drug firm plays up long flights fear; Observer investigation reveals covert funding for health pressure groups. The Guardian.

11 www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2004/jan/25/society.research

12 http://cal-access.sos.ca.gov/Lobbying/Firms/Detail.aspx?id=1147235&session=2007

13 http://cffsi.org/about.html

14 Letter dated from Seth Jacobson on Citizens for Fire Safety letterhead to Dr. William Hickerson of Arkansas Children's Hospital in Little Rock, Arkansas. The letter conflates all state legislation, and claims uniformly that "these bills advocate the complete removal of this chemical without providing an alternative means of protection."

15 Santa Monica Daily Press, Volume 5, Issue 103, Monday, March 13th, 2006

16 Letter dated June 25, 2007 on American Fire Safety Council letterhead, subsequently circulated to fire fighter organizations.

17 Fighting for Safety *Washington Post* January 26, 2008 www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/01/25/AR2008012503170_pf.html

18 http://tobaccodocuments.org/landman/TI01770029-0100.html

19 "Cancer Risk Among Firefighters: A Review and Meta-analysis of 32 Studies" Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine November 2006 "http://www.joem.org/pt/re/joem/abstract.00043764-20061100000014.htm;jsessionid=LhZFMmHcv1D6KjLY2QdtyyKjGmX35pyQxT1KvBysQ1P1JTHWkcV4!1379360954!181195629!8091!-1

20 http://greensciencepolicy.org/