



Alaska Community Action on Toxics  
505 W. Northern Lights; Suite 205, Anchorage, AK 99503  
Phone: (907) 222-7714; Fax: (907) 222-7715;

## NEWS ADVISORY FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: 4/16/14

**CONTACTS:** Maricarmen Cruz-Guilloty, Alaska Community Action on Toxics at 907-222-7714 or cell 907-891-4280, or [maricarmen@akaction.org](mailto:maricarmen@akaction.org)

Tony Iallonardo, Communications Director, Safer Chemicals Healthy Families, at 202.503.8581 or [TonyIallonardo@SaferChemicals.org](mailto:TonyIallonardo@SaferChemicals.org)

**PHOTOS & VISUALS:** will be available online at <http://www.akaction.org/?p=3152> after the event.

### **Anchorage consumers return products containing toxic chemicals to Walgreens stores**

*Customers across the nation demand Walgreens "Gets Tough on Toxics"*

Anchorage, AK (April 16, 2014) – Concerned parents and consumers converged on an Anchorage Walgreens today saying that the company has failed to take action to reduce the sale of products containing toxic chemicals. The shoppers pointed to a new study showing that some Walgreens products contain harmful chemicals linked to cancer, learning disabilities, infertility and other serious health conditions. The event was part of a national "[Mind the Store](#)" day of action to raise awareness of toxic chemicals in consumer products. Similar events took place at over 45 Walgreens stores nationwide.

Today's actions were in response to a new study by [HealthyStuff.org](#) (a project of the Ecology Center), which found that many Walgreens products contained hazardous chemicals. The actions included the return of products containing toxic chemicals, and the delivering of postcards to the store manager signed by concerned customers. Returned products also included cosmetics identified as "toxic" by the [Campaign for Safe Cosmetics](#), including baby shampoo with the preservative quaternium-15—which eventually releases the cancer-causing chemical formaldehyde.

Since April 2013, over 60,000 customers have sent Walgreens letters urging the company to create an action plan on the "Hazardous 100+" toxic chemicals. To date the company has not responded to the Mind the Store campaign's letters or requests to meet. The Mind the Store Campaign has been encouraging Walgreens to adopt a comprehensive chemicals policy.

**"While we push for states to pass legislation such as SB 151 (Toxic-Free Children's Act) and for the federal government to do something meaningful to fix our broken regulatory system, consumers have an important role to play in asking retailers to stop selling products with toxic chemicals,"** said Maricarmen Cruz-Guilloty from Alaska Community Action on Toxics. **"We hope that Walgreens is paying attention today, and will begin to Mind the Store. As the largest pharmacy chain in America, Walgreens has the power and the responsibility to sell safer and less toxic products to its customers."**

Scientists at HealthyStuff.org tested 44 products from Walgreens, ranging from household cleaning products, school supplies, pet toys and other everyday consumer products. Many were found to have one or more chemicals, including PVC (vinyl) plastic, phthalates, organotins and heavy metals that have been identified by state and federal authoritative government bodies to be toxic to our health. High resolution photos of the specific products, some of which are Walgreens branded products, and test results are available at [HealthyStuff.org](#).

**"Our new study shows that some products sold at Walgreens contain toxic chemicals such as phthalates, flame retardants and vinyl plastic,"** said Jeff Gearhart, research director for the Ecology Center and HealthyStuff.org. **"It shouldn't be a case of 'buyer beware,' when shopping for consumer products. Retailers have a responsibility to offer safer products. As a result we have joined our partners in the Mind the Store Campaign to call on Walgreens to get products containing toxic chemicals off of their store shelves."**

**New research by [HealthyStuff.org](http://HealthyStuff.org) into toxic chemicals in Walgreens products:**

- Laboratory testing identified high levels of phthalates in a number of products sold at Walgreens, including a 3-ring binder, vinyl shower curtain, iPod/ iPhone charger, and handbag purse. Of the 13 vinyl products screened for phthalates, all 13 tested positive for regulated phthalates at levels greater than 10,000 ppm. Examples include:
  - A vinyl shower curtain contained 18.2% of the phthalate DEHP.
  - A vinyl 3-ring binder contained 14.3% of the phthalate DINP.
  - Vinyl cleaning gloves contained 37.5% of the phthalate DINP.
  - A blue handbag purse contained 4.5% of the phthalate DEHP.
  - An iPod/ iPhone/ iPad charger contained 32.7% of the phthalate DINP.
- About 30% (13 of 44) of the products tested contained high chlorine levels, suggesting they may be made of the toxic plastic, polyvinyl chloride (PVC or vinyl).
- A pet tennis ball contained elevated levels of lead.
- About 27% of the products tested contained antimony based flame retardants.

**“Retailers such as Walgreens have the responsibility to sell products that are safe, not toxic,”** said Mike Schade, Mind the Store Campaign Director for Safer Chemicals, Healthy Families. **“While other big retailers including Target and Walmart are beginning to tackle toxic chemicals, Walgreens has yet to develop a comprehensive plan of action to address unnecessary dangerous chemicals in the products they sell.”**

In recent months, several major national retailers including Walmart, Target, and Bed, Bath and Beyond have announced significant new initiatives to disclose and limit the use of chemicals that are known hazards and appear on the Mind the Store’s “Hazardous 100+” list. Walgreens is considered a laggard, having undertaken no major initiatives to address toxic chemicals in their supply chain and ignoring feedback from consumers and requests for meetings from environmental health organizations.

This event coincides with the last week of the Alaska Legislative session. SB 151, the Toxic-Free Children’s Act is still pending for a hearing in the Senate Judiciary Committee, chaired by Senators Coghill and McGuire. The bill would protect Alaska’s children from toxic chemicals in children’s products.

**PHOTOS & VISUALS:** will be available online at <http://www.akaction.org/?p=3152> immediately following the event.

####

For more information contact

**Maricarmen Cruz-Guilloty**, Environmental Health and Justice Coordinator, Alaska Community Action on Toxics at 907-222-7714 or cell 907-891-4280, or [maricarmen@akaction.org](mailto:maricarmen@akaction.org)

**Tony Iallonardo**, Communications Director, Safer Chemicals Healthy Families, at 202-503-8581 or [TonyIallonardo@SaferChemicals.org](mailto:TonyIallonardo@SaferChemicals.org)

For Media assistance, please contact Heather McCausland at 907-222-7714 or [heather@akaction.org](mailto:heather@akaction.org).

**[The Hazardous 100+](#)** list was developed by non-governmental organizations (NGOs), such as [Alaska Community Action on Toxics](#), affiliated with [Safer Chemicals, Healthy Families](#), a broad-based national coalition working to protect human health and the environment from dangerous chemicals in everyday consumer products. <http://mindthestore.saferchemicals.org/hazardous100+>

**[Mind the Store - Safer Chemicals Healthy Families](#):** It's not feasible to ask the average consumer to keep [the Hazardous 100+](#) chemicals in their head when they go to the store. Instead, we launched the [Mind the Store](#)

[campaign](#) challenging the nation's largest retailers to restrict [the Hazardous 100+](#) chemicals. For example, Krogers (Fred Meyers) has a list of 101 chemicals it won't allow in its Simple Truth brand products. Walmart changed the marketplace substantially when it listed several flame retardants and told its suppliers it wouldn't sell products that had them. Now we are calling to Walgreens to improve their policies.

[http:// mindthestore.saferchemicals.org](http://mindthestore.saferchemicals.org)

[The Campaign for Safe Cosmetics](#) is a national coalition of nonprofit health and environmental organizations. We're working with thousands of supporters to make sure we all have access to safer personal care products and smarter laws governing cosmetic safety. [http:// www.safecosmetics.org/](http://www.safecosmetics.org/)

[Alaska Community Action on Toxics \(ACAT\)](#) is a statewide non-profit public interest environmental health research and advocacy organization dedicated to protecting environmental health and achieving environmental justice. The mission of Alaska Community Action on Toxics is: *to assure justice by advocating for environmental and community health. We believe that everyone has a right to clean air, clean water and toxic-free food.* We work to stop the production, proliferation, and release of toxic chemicals that may harm human health or the environment. For more information, please call 907-222-7714 or visit [www.akaction.org](http://www.akaction.org).