

Protecting Alaskan's Health From Toxic Flame Retardants

SB** and HB**



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Alaska's Toxic-Free Children's Act joins other states' lead to protect our health from exposures to toxic chemicals. Toxic flame retardant chemicals are used in a variety of products we use every day—despite the fact that they are highly toxic and do not provide proven fire safety benefits. Some of the products that contain flame retardants include: furniture, plastics, baby products, nap mats, and textiles. While chemical companies say their flame retardants make our products safer, the truth is that many uses of flame retardant chemicals do not protect us from fires. In fact, flame retardants cause more harm than good by creating more toxic soot when objects with flame retardants burn. And even before being burned, flame retardants may harm our health because they can be released from things such as couch foam and become attached to household dust that we can inhale or ingest. Infants and children who spend more time playing on the floor are at a greater risk of exposure to toxic flame retardants.

Brominated flame retardants: In Alaska we have a toxic legacy from a type of flame retardants called PBDEs (polybrominated diphenyl ethers) which come from both local sources as well as distant sources that travel to Alaska by ocean and wind currents. These chemicals are building up in the Arctic and entering the food chain. Women from the Yukon Kuskokwim Delta of Alaska have the highest level of PBDEs of any population in the Arctic. Brominated flame retardants have been detected in Alaska's wild salmon and marine mammals. Some PBDEs are found in higher levels in children compared with adults.

Chlorinated flame retardants: Chlorinated flame retardants are the main replacement for certain brominated flame retardants being phased-out. In the mid-1970's, a harmful flame retardant chemical called chlorinated Tris (TDCPP or “Chlorinated Tris”) was banned from use in children's pajamas because it caused genetic damage. But we continue to find TDCPP and other Tris variations in products for infants and young children. For example, we participated in a study to test flame retardants in children and baby products and found that 22 out of the 24 foam-containing nap mats we tested had been treated with at least one chemical flame retardant. Nine of the mats contained chlorinated Tris, including a nap mat from an Anchorage's day care.

The Act will phase out ten toxic flame retardants in children's products and home furniture:

This legislation will end the use of unnecessary and toxic flame retardant chemicals in children's products and home furniture.

The Act will also require labeling toxic flame retardants in children's products and home furniture:

This legislation will require labeling of children's products and upholstered furniture to let shoppers know whether it contains toxic flame retardant chemicals.

Alaskan children's health is already vulnerable and we should be doing everything that we can to ensure a healthy future:

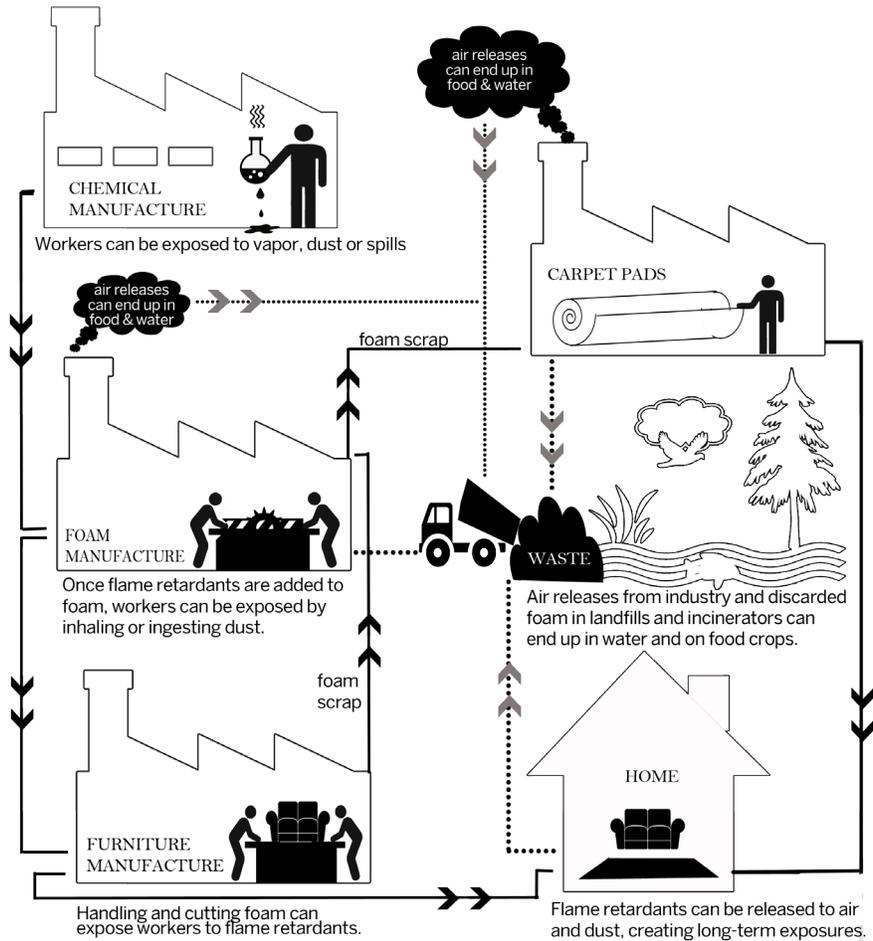
- Birth defects in Alaska are twice as high as in the United States as a whole.
- Alaska Native infants have twice the risk of birth defects as white infants born in Alaska.
- This legislation will protect children's health by preventing exposure to known toxic chemicals.

The Toxic-Free Children's Act is good for business because it:

- Provides important safety information to businesses and consumers.
- Helps Alaskan businesses meet the increasing consumer demand for safer products.
- Encourages innovation and the development of safer alternatives in furniture and other products.
- Creates market pressure on the chemical industry to provide safe chemicals to manufacturers and, in turn, safer products to retailers and consumers.

LIFE CYCLE OF A FLAME RETARDANT CHEMICAL

People can be exposed to flame retardant chemicals on the job, at home, and through releases to our air and water from factories, landfills and incinerators.



See more in a detailed analysis from EPA's Design for the Environment Program:
<http://bit.ly/1w9Pliv>



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