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Study Tests Over 100 Couches Across U.S. Pittsburgh Sample Free of Flame Retardants, Others Not so Lucky

(Pittsburgh, PA) A new peer-reviewed study released today tested over 100 couch samples from across the U.S. and found that 85% contained toxic or untested flame retardant chemicals. This includes 41% of the couches testing positive for the cancer-causing chlorinated Tris, also known as TDCPP, which was banned from children's pajamas decades ago. Some of the key findings are listed below:

- 85% of couches tested contained toxic or untested flame retardant chemicals.
- The flame-retardants are used heavily in the foam, in some cases they made up 11% of the weight of the foam.
- The toxic chemicals used in couches do not stay in the couches – they migrate out into your household dust.

The study, published in *Environmental Science and Technology*, emphasizes the failures of inadequate federal laws on toxic chemicals. Weak federal laws have allowed toxic chemicals like flame retardants on to the market with limited health and safety information required. The study also shows an increase in the use of flame retardants in couches, despite no data demonstrating fire safety benefit from the use of such chemicals.

Women for a Healthy Environment submitted a couch sample for this study. "We were pleased that our tests came back negative, meaning no flame retardants were detected in our samples. However, many others were not as fortunate," said WHE's executive director Michelle Naccarati-Chapkis. "This study is yet another example of how our current regulations are failing to protect public health. More frequently we hear stories about harmful chemicals being detected in products found in our home and office settings. We need chemical reform at the federal level to safeguard our families."

This past summer a group of 26 Republican and Democratic Senators sent a letter calling on the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to finalize its rule making regarding these

toxic flame retardant chemicals. Since 2002, at least twelve states have banned one or more of these flame retardants due to the mounting evidence of harm to human health.

Flame retardant chemicals, like those found in the couches, are associated with cancer, serious adverse neurological, reproductive, and hormonal health effects. These chemicals continuously migrate from products, to house dust, children and pets. Recent studies show toddlers have three times the level of contamination as their mothers, and show that children of color have levels higher than the general population.

Dust is the primary route of exposure for these chemicals. Dusting frequently with a microfiber cloth (no need to use dusting sprays), a wet mop and frequently vacuuming with a HEPA filter will reduce your exposure. Studies have also shown that frequently washing your hands with soap and water will also decrease exposure.

[For a link to the study, visit http://pubs.acs.org/doi/abs/10.1021/es303471d.](http://pubs.acs.org/doi/abs/10.1021/es303471d)

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About Women for a Healthy Environment: Women for a Healthy Environment educates the community about environmental health risks so individuals can make healthy choices for themselves and their families and advocate for change for a better tomorrow for all.

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