

# HealthyStuff.org \* Coalition for a Safe and Healthy CT

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**Wednesday, Sept. 16, 1 pm EDT**

**CONTACT: Cindy Luppi 617/338-8131 x208**  
**Shayna Samuels, 718-541-4785**

## **Testing Reveals Lead, Arsenic, PVC, & Hazardous Flame Retardants in School Supplies, Pet Products, Cars, and More**

### **CT Leaders Urge State and Federal Reforms**

*(September 16, 2009 –Hartford, CT)* The Coalition for a Safe and Healthy Connecticut and the Ecology Center released results today on over 900 common products tested for toxic chemicals including lead, cadmium, mercury, bromine, chlorine (PVC) and arsenic. Researchers analyzed the ingredients of pet products, cars, women’s handbags, children’s car seats and more, creating the largest database yet of independent tests of toxic chemicals in consumer goods.

HealthyStuff.org tested for chemicals based on their toxicity, persistence and tendency to build up in people and the environment. Such chemicals have been linked to reproductive problems, developmental and learning disabilities, liver toxicity and certain cancers. The testing was conducted with a screening technology – the portable X-Ray Fluorescence (XRF) analyzer – that identifies the elemental composition of materials on or near the surface of products.

“As a nurse whose father and dog have both been touched by leukemia, I am outraged to learn that so many pet toys and other consumer products contain unnecessary toxic chemicals,” said **Beka Apostolidis, RN, of Cromwell**. “It’s time for our government to hold industry responsible for the safety of their chemicals and products.”

“Connecticut officials have shown real leadership in recent years to phase out toxic chemicals in common everyday products like children’s toys, food and beverage containers,” said **Mark Mitchell, MD, President for the CT Coalition for Environmental Justice**. “To effectively protect public health, however, comprehensive reform is needed and Connecticut can help lead the way.”

#### **New Key Findings From HealthyStuff.org:**

- **Pet Products** – HealthyStuff.org tested over 400 pet products, including beds, chew toys, collars and leashes. **One quarter of all pet products had detectable levels of lead, including seven percent with levels higher than 300 ppm** – the current Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) standard for lead in children’s products.
- **Automobiles** – HealthyStuff.org tested nearly 700 new and used vehicles, from 1980 to 2010 model year vehicles. **Levels of some chemicals found in vehicles are 5-10 times higher than in homes or offices**. Since the average American spends more than 1.5 hours in their car every day, this can be a major source of toxic chemical exposure.

- **Children’s Car Seats** – Infant and child car seats contain chemical additives that can have adverse health effects on babies and young children. **Over half (58%) of car seats contain one or more hazardous chemicals, including PVC, BFRs and heavy metals.** Despite the toxic chemicals, it is vital to use a car seat for your child because they do save lives.
- **Back-to-School Products** – HealthyStuff.org screened over 60 common back-to-school supplies, including backpacks, pencil cases, binders and lunchboxes. Far too many of these supplies are made of polyvinyl chloride (PVC) and 22% contained detectable levels of lead. **Overall nearly 90% of back-to-school supplies contained one or more chemicals of concern.**
- **Women’s Handbags** – HealthyStuff.org tested over 100 women’s handbags and **detected lead in over 75% of the bags analyzed.** Sixty-four percent (64%) of the bags contained lead over 300 ppm – the CPSC limit for lead in *children’s* products. **Over half of the handbags contain more than 1,000 ppm lead.**

Connecticut officials at all levels of government are poised to move forward with comprehensive reforms to our current laws. State legislation that builds on advances of the past few years will be filed in January next year. At the federal level, Congressional leaders are expected to introduce a new bill this fall to reform the outdated Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA) – the current federal law for regulating chemicals. These reforms would phase out the most dangerous chemicals from the manufacturing process; require industry to take responsibility for the safety of their products; and use the best science to protect vulnerable groups. To date the EPA has required testing on only about 200 of the more than 80,000 chemicals that have been on the market since the law was passed 33 years ago.

“Connecticut has taken a strong stand in making sure the chemicals we use every day are safe and healthy, and it’s time for the federal government to step up and match that commitment,” said **Representative Chris Murphy** (CT-5). “HealthyStuff.org is a testament to the need for a comprehensive, modernized federal chemical safety system that protects our children and families and moves our economy toward safer alternatives.”

“While the Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act, passed into law last year, was a good first step in the ongoing process of improving our product safety laws, this report shows that work still needs to be done,” said **Representative Rosa L. DeLauro** (CT-3). “I remain committed to working with the Coalition for a Safe and Healthy Connecticut as well as my colleagues to remove harmful products from our store shelves and eliminate them from use in manufacturing. The health and safety of our children and families demands that we act now. We should not compromise when it comes to protecting the public health.”

“A Made in the USA label should be a guarantee, not a warning,” said **Charlotte Brody, National Field Director for Safer Chemicals, Healthy Families**, a coalition working toward toxic chemical policy reform. “This database of products is further proof that our system of testing and regulating toxic chemicals is broken. We have an opportunity to reform federal law this year and start putting common sense limits on harmful chemicals to protect the health of Americans.”

“The more we test, the more we find that the presence of toxic chemicals is widespread in everyday consumer products,” said **Jeff Gearhart, Research Director at the Ecology Center**, who created the site. “It should not be the responsibility of public health advocates to test these products. Product manufacturers and legislators must take the lead and replace dangerous substances with safe alternatives.”

The results can be found on the user-friendly website: [www.HealthyStuff.org](http://www.HealthyStuff.org). Visitors can look up products by manufacturer, brand, or product type and easily generate lists of highly rated and poorly rated products.

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