



645 Farmington Ave., 3rd Floor
Hartford, CT 06105
860-232-6232

NEWS RELEASE

EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE
until 12:01 a.m. EST, Wed. Dec. 5, 2007

CONTACT: Sarah Uhl 860-232-6232
Coalition for a Safe & Healthy Connecticut

Lead, Cadmium, and Other Harmful Chemicals Found in Popular Children's Toys – Leading Environmental Health Groups Release Testing Results Today at www.HealthyToys.org

Holiday Favorites, Including Hannah Montana, Geoffrey & Circo Contaminated with High Levels of Toxic Chemicals

(Hartford -- December 5, 2007) – The Coalition for a Safe & Healthy CT today release the results of testing 1,200 popular children's toys for toxic chemicals at www.HealthyToys.org. Along with the Washington Toxics Coalition, Clean Water Action, and other leading environmental health groups across the country, the Ecology Center developed this site to better inform consumers about the products they will be purchasing this holiday season.

“The government is not testing for toxic chemicals in toys, and too many manufacturers are not self-regulating, so several nonprofit organizations created the nation's first toy database to help inform and empower consumers,” said Tracey Easthope, MPH, Director of the Ecology Center's Environmental Health Project. “Ultimately consumers need to take action to compel the federal government and toy manufacturers to eliminate dangerous chemicals from toys.”

According to Sarah Uhl, Coordinator of the Coalition for a Safe & Healthy CT, “Toxics in toys is a perfect example of how our regulatory system is broken. We need to know how toxics are being used, and which products contain them, and we need to require that safer alternatives be used whenever feasible.”

While some toys had high levels of chemicals such as lead, cadmium, and arsenic, others were free of these harmful additives. Parents and other holiday shoppers can now easily search by product name, brand, or toy type (i.e. dolls, teething rings, jewelry, bibs, etc.) to learn how the products rate in terms of harmful chemical content. Babies and young children are the most vulnerable since their brains and bodies are still developing and because they frequently put toys into their mouths.

Researchers chose to test these particular chemicals because they have been identified by many regulatory agencies as problematic, and because of their association with reproductive problems, developmental and learning disabilities, hormone problems and cancer and because they are found in children's products. The testing was conducted with a screening technology -- the portable X-Ray Fluorescence (XRF) analyzer -- which identifies the elemental composition of materials on the surface of products.

"Toxic chemicals have no place in children's toys, period," said Ted Schettler, MD, Science Director at the Science and Environmental Health Network. "Even low-level toxic chemical exposures can have lifelong impacts. Getting toxic chemicals out of children's toys is a moral and medical imperative."

HealthyToys.org tested 1,200 children's products and more than 3,000 components of those products.

Following are highlights of the HealthyToys.org findings:

- **Lead** -- When children are exposed to lead the developmental and nervous system consequences are irreversible. Recently the American Academy of Pediatrics recommended a level of 40 parts per million (ppm) of lead as the maximum that should be allowed in children's products. Nevertheless, there are no federal regulations for lead in vinyl or plastic toys or children's jewelry. The only existing standard is for lead in paint. HealthyToys.org found lead in 35% of all the products tested. Seventeen percent (17%) of the products had levels above the 600 ppm federal recall standard used for lead paint! The testing detected more than 6,700 ppm in Dollar Store animal figurines; 6,000 ppm in a Hannah Montana shoulder bag; 1,931 ppm lead in a Toys R Us Geoffrey brand doll; and 1,700 ppm lead in a pair of Circo baby shoes.
- **Polyvinyl Chloride (PVC / Vinyl)** -- HealthyToys.org determined products were made with PVC plastic by measuring their chlorine content. PVC is a problematic plastic from an environmental health perspective because it creates major hazards throughout its life cycle and contains additives that can be dangerous to human health. Phthalates are chemicals that are very commonly added to PVC to make it soft and flexible, however, they can leach out of the plastic. Exposure to phthalates is linked to birth defects of the genitals and altered levels of reproductive hormones in baby boys. There are currently no federal regulations limiting phthalates in children's products. California recently passed a ban of several phthalates in children's products, and Europe has restricted the use of phthalates in children's toys and child care items. 47% percent of toys (excluding jewelry) tested by HealthyToys.org were PVC.
- **Cadmium** -- Cadmium is a heavy metal that is used in coatings and pigments in plastic and paint. It is a known human carcinogen and exposure can cause adverse effects on the kidneys, lungs, liver, and testes. Currently there are no mandatory restrictions on cadmium in children's products in the U.S. HealthyToys.org found cadmium at levels greater than 100 ppm in 2.9% of products -- 22 of the 764 products tested for cadmium-- including painted toys, PVC toys, backpacks, lunch boxes and bibs.

HealthyToys.org also tested toys for arsenic, mercury, bromine, chromium, tin and antimony -- chemicals that have all been linked to health problems and have been subject to either regulatory restrictions or voluntary limits set by industry associations or third party environmental organizations.

"With all of the toy recalls it is becoming increasingly difficult to shop for children," said Alexandra Zissu, co-author of *The Complete Organic Pregnancy* and mother of a 22-month-old girl. "HealthyToys.org eliminates fear of the unknown and allows parents to make better decisions about the products we're buying."

The good news is that safe toys are possible. 28% of the products tested did not contain any lead, cadmium, arsenic, mercury or PVC, including many made in China. Examples of healthier toys include: Amazing Animals Hippo by Fisher-Price (made in China); Caterpillar Grasping Toy, Melissa and Doug (made in Vietnam); and B.R. Bruin Stacking Cups (made in China).

These results show that manufacturers *can* make toys free of unnecessary toxic chemicals. HealthyToys.org provides specific guidelines for how to petition federal and state government agencies and toy manufacturers to urge them to phase out toxic chemicals from toys immediately.

With millions of toys on the market it was impossible to test them all, but visitors to HealthyToys.org can nominate other products to be tested. The most commonly requested items will be tested each week leading up to the Holidays.