

Greenlist Bulletin

From the Toxics Use Reduction Institute
at the University of Massachusetts Lowell

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In This Issue

Toxic Chemicals Turn Up in Great Lakes Plastic Pollution

Cutting Specific Atmospheric Pollutants Would Slow Sea Level Rise

Safe and Sustainable Chemicals: The Case for Action

Unhealthy Mercury Levels Persist in Connecticut Waterways and Fish

CEC Secretariat Releases Final Independent Report Investigating Environmental and Health Hazards of Spent Lead-acid Battery Trade in North America

China Identifies 58 Chemicals To Act On

Safer Alternatives to Bisphenol A (BPA)

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[Greenlist Bulletin Archives](#)

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Toxic Chemicals Turn Up in Great Lakes Plastic Pollution

[Source: Great Lakes Echo, April 9, 2013](#)

Author: Kathiann M. Kowalski

Toxic chemicals clinging to plastics could cause health problems for fish and other organisms in the Great Lakes.

They were discovered in samples from the first-ever Great Lakes plastic survey in Lake Erie, Lake Huron and Lake Superior last summer, Lorena Rios Mendoza, an assistant chemistry professor at the University of Wisconsin-Superior, announced Monday.

And instead of just sitting in sediments as some scientists previously thought, those pollutants might be traveling with plastics to other parts of the Great Lakes.

Rios Mendoza presented the survey results at the American Chemical Society's national meeting. She and other researchers found from 1,500 to 1.7 million plastic particles per square mile, with the highest counts from Lake Erie. Rios Mendoza's analysis of the Lake Erie samples found polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, also called polyaromatics or PAHs, at concentrations roughly twice what she found in the Atlantic Ocean. The analysis also revealed polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), which she is still analyzing.

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Cutting Specific Atmospheric Pollutants Would Slow Sea Level Rise

[Source: National Science Foundation, April 14, 2013](#)

With coastal areas bracing for rising sea levels, new research indicates that cutting emissions of certain pollutants can greatly slow sea level rise this century.

Scientists found that reductions in four pollutants that cycle comparatively quickly through the atmosphere could temporarily forestall the rate of sea level rise by roughly 25 to 50 percent.

The researchers focused on emissions of four heat-trapping pollutants: methane, tropospheric ozone, hydrofluorocarbons and black carbon.

These gases and particles last anywhere from a week to a decade in the atmosphere and can influence climate more quickly than carbon dioxide, which persists in the atmosphere for centuries.

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Safe and Sustainable Chemicals: The Case for Action

[Source: GreenBiz.com, April 8, 2013](#)

Authors: Corinna Kester and Mark Rossi

In 1975, California implemented a law requiring that foam used in furniture be treated with chemicals to prevent the product from catching fire if placed in an open flame for 12 seconds. Across the United States, furniture manufacturers responded by adding flame retardants to their products.

More recently, however, the effectiveness of these fire retardants in reducing household fires has come under question, and scientific studies now indicate links between certain flame retardants and decreased fertility, lower infant birth weight as well as deficits in physical and mental development in young children. . . .

Given the growing market demands, regulations and reputational risks, companies need to understand the impacts of chemical use on society and business and proactively manage their use in products and supply chains.

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Unhealthy Mercury Levels Persist in Connecticut Waterways and Fish

[Source: New Haven Register, April 19, 2013](#)

Author: Theresa Sullivan Barger

Wethersfield resident Patrice Gilbert knew compact fluorescent bulbs contain mercury, so as they burned out she put them aside until she could find out where to properly dispose of them.

One day, she accidentally knocked one off the counter and broke it. "I scooped that broken one up, put the other three in a paper bag, put that in a plastic bag and put it in my recycling bin," she said. "I didn't know what to do with them."

Gilbert's action is typical. Nationally, only about 2 percent of household CFLs are recycled properly, the Association of Lighting and Mercury Recyclers says. In Connecticut, only 4 percent of households participate in hazardous waste collection days -- where mercury-containing CFLs, thermostats and thermometers should be recycled.

Instead, those items usually end up in one of the state's trash-to-energy plants, where, through the disposal process, mercury gas is emitted into the air and eventually pollutes waterways and ends up in fish. While 40 percent of mercury pollution in Connecticut comes from out-of-state sources such as Midwestern coal-fired plants, volcanoes and other sources of pollution, 60 percent comes from in-state sources -- primarily the state's six trash-to-energy plants and its one coal-fired plant.

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CEC Secretariat Releases Final Independent Report Investigating Environmental and Health Hazards of Spent Lead-acid Battery Trade in North America

[Source: Commission for Environmental Cooperation, April 15, 2013](#)

Montreal -- On Monday, the Commission for Environmental Cooperation Secretariat released its final independent report: *Hazardous Trade? An Examination of US-generated Spent Lead-acid Battery Exports and Secondary Lead Recycling in Mexico, the United States and Canada*. The report analyzes the reported cross-border trade in lead-acid batteries and presents recommendations on how to better monitor their handling to the CEC Council, composed of Canada's Environment Minister, Mexico's Secretary of the Environment, and the US Environmental Protection Agency Administrator. . . .

Spent lead-acid batteries (SLABs) from cars and trucks are one of the world's most-recycled consumer products because the lead they contain is valuable and can be processed for reuse. The CEC initiated this report in response to concerns that US companies were shipping batteries to

Mexico and other countries to avoid the cost imposed by stricter environmental laws.

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Access report [here](#).

China Identifies 58 Chemicals To Act On

[Source: ChemSec, March 4, 2013](#)

China has recently presented a five-year chemicals management plan, including a list of 58 chemicals for priority action. These include commonly used endocrine disruptors such as DEHP, Bisphenol A and Nonylphenol.

China is the world's largest chemical producer, with not only a large chemical manufacturing industry but also with a vast production of consumer products. Improved chemicals regulation in China is crucial, for the Chinese environment and the health of the Chinese people, as well as safeguarding human health and limiting toxic pollution globally, says Jerker Ligthart, ChemSec senior chemicals advisor.

The Chinese Ministry of Environment's five-year plan also acknowledges for the first time the existence of "cancer villages," and states that the government will present an "elimination list" as well as a "restriction list" by 2015. CMR, PBT, vPvB and EDC properties will lay the ground for the addition of chemicals to these lists.

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Safer Alternatives to Bisphenol A (BPA)

[Source: Oregon Environmental Council, 2013](#)

Bisphenol A (BPA), a chemical that is produced in excess of 2 billion pounds a year in the United States, is widely used in certain kinds of plastics and epoxy resins. More than 200 independent scientific studies show that exposures to low doses of BPA are associated with a wide range of adverse health effects in later life.

Due to growing scientific and public concern about BPA, leading U.S. retailers as well as chemical manufacturers have created safer, cost-effective alternatives to this toxic chemical.

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