



Information Sheet: Flame Retardants

What are Flame Retardants?

Flame retardants are chemical compounds added to various products to reduce their flammability and slow down the spread of fires. They are commonly used in household items like furniture, electronics, mattresses, carpets, and building materials. There are different types of flame retardants, each with its unique properties and applications.

Why are Flame Retardants a Concern for Canadians?

Flame retardants have become a concern for Canadians due to potential health and environmental risks associated with their use. These chemicals can leach or escape from products over time, leading to exposure through inhalation, ingestion, or dermal contact. The Canadian government and citizens alike are worried about the following aspects:

Health Effects:

- Endocrine disruption
- Neurological and cognitive effects
- Cancer risks
- Respiratory irritation and issues.

Environmental Effects:

- Bioaccumulation: Flame retardants can accumulate in the environment and the food chain, posing a threat to wildlife and ecosystems. Canadian species like salmon, seals, and polar bears have been found with detectable levels of flame retardants.



- **Persistence:** Many flame retardants are persistent in the environment, resisting degradation and remaining in soil, water, and air for extended periods.
- **Contamination of Water Sources:** Flame retardants can leach from landfills and end up in water sources, potentially impacting drinking water quality.

How to Protect Yourself:

While complete avoidance of flame retardants is challenging due to their widespread use, there are several ways to reduce exposure and protect yourself:

Choose Safer Products: Opt for products labeled as "flame retardant-free" or those that use alternative, safer flame retardants.

Ventilate Indoor Spaces: Ensure proper ventilation in your home to reduce the buildup of indoor air pollutants, including flame retardant particles.

Wash Hands Frequently: Regularly wash your hands, especially after handling products known to contain flame retardants.

Use a HEPA Filter: Consider using a high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filter in your home to reduce airborne pollutants.

Dust and Vacuum Regularly: Dust and vacuum your home frequently to minimize exposure to flame retardants that may accumulate in household dust.

Proper Disposal: Follow appropriate disposal guidelines for products containing flame retardants to prevent environmental contamination.

Flame retardants are a deep topic of concern for Canadians due to their serious health and environmental impacts. While they play a role in fire safety, it is essential to balance their use with the protection of human health and the environment. Staying informed, making conscious purchasing decisions, and taking steps to reduce exposure can help Canadians mitigate potential risks associated with flame retardants.



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