



Michigan Network for  
**CHILDREN'S**  
**Environmental**  
**HEALTH**

# Toxic Times

*A recap of the top stories on toxics  
in Michigan and beyond.*

News Highlights from December 8, 2009 – December 21, 2009

## MICHIGAN NEWS

### **Michigan approves smoking ban**

*The Detroit News*, Friday, December 11, 2009

A long awaited smoking ban was passed by the Michigan legislature and will take effect on May 1. The ban makes exceptions for three Detroit casinos, cigar bars, home offices, and motor vehicles. The legislation was passed overwhelmingly.

<http://www.detnews.com/article/20091211/POLITICS02/912110394/1022/Michigan-approves-smoking-ban>

### **Michigan, Illinois, Minnesota consider fire retardant ban**

*Great Lakes Echo*, Thursday, December 10, 2009

Michigan lawmakers want to ban a controversial fire retardant used in electronics and home furnishings. Scientists say deca-BDE is toxic, persistent, and bioaccumulative. The Michigan Legislature banned manufacturing and distribution of materials containing more than 0.1% of two other PBDEs but not deca.

<http://greatlakesecho.org/2009/12/10/michigan-illinois-minnesota-consider-fire-retardant-ban/>

### **Despite cleanup, PCBs on rise**

*The Detroit Free Press*, Wednesday, December 9, 2009

After PCBs were discovered in the Ten Mile drain and Lange-Revere Canal the EPA initiated a major cleanup. Despite the \$10 million spent to cleanup the contamination, new tests showed that levels of the chemical in the drain and several canals are higher than ever. Several of these canals that have shown elevated levels were previously not contaminated.

<http://www.freep.com/article/20091209/NEWS04/912090354/1322/Despite-cleanup-PCBs-on-rise>

## NATIONAL NEWS

### **New CDC Survey Tracks Mercury Levels in Americans**

*The New York Times*, Friday, December 11, 2009

Following research that has focused on young children and women of childbearing age, the CDC has released the first study on mercury exposure on the wider U.S. population. The study found that mercury exposure increases with age then starts to taper off after the age of 50.

<http://www.nytimes.com/gwire/2009/12/11/11greenwire-new-cdc-survey-tracks-mercury-levels-in-america-42540.html>

### **Sharp Rise in Autism, But Causes are Unclear**

*The Wall Street Journal*, Saturday, December 19, 2009

Around 1 out of every 110 children in the U.S. have been diagnosed with autism, a significant increase from recent years according to a new government study. From 2002 to 2006 there was a 57% increase in autism spectrum disorders. Boys were four to five times more likely to be diagnosed than girls.

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB126116363121997487.html>

### **3 Companies to Stop Using DecaBDE**

*The New York Times*, Friday, December 18, 2009

The commonly used fire retardant found in consumer electronics, furniture, and textiles has been voluntarily banned by manufacturers Chemtura, Albermarle, and ICL Industrial Products. The companies would end U.S. production, importation, and use by December 2012 and a full ban would take effect a year later. However, the agreement does not address importation of consumer products containing the toxic chemical.

[http://www.nytimes.com/2009/12/19/science/earth/19flame.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/12/19/science/earth/19flame.html?_r=1)

### **Federal Official: Avoid Bisphenol A**

*The Daily Green*, Monday, December 14, 2009

Bisphenol A was originally developed as a synthetic estrogen before a wide range of uses was discovered for it. Today it is commonly used in hard plastics and other products. Exposure to the chemical has been linked to a long list of health problems. The FDA is currently deciding whether Bisphenol A is safe to use in food packaging, water bottles, and baby bottles. However, an official in the government has recommended that it be avoided even before the FDA's findings have been released.

<http://www.thedailygreen.com/environmental-news/latest/bisphenol-a-fda-47121402>

### **Chemicals In People**

*Chemical and Engineering News*, Saturday, December 14, 2009

According to the "Fourth National Report on Human Exposure to Environmental Chemicals" Americans are being widely exposed to PBDEs, perfluorinated chemicals, bisphenol A, and many other chemicals found in everyday products. The study looked at exposure to 212 chemicals, including 75 that had not previously been measured in humans. The data is based on blood and urine samples from around 2,400 people from 2003 to 2004.

<http://pubs.acs.org/cen/news/87/i51/8751news4.html>

### **EPA Unveils new policies on water at schools**

*The Chronicle*, Tuesday, December 8, 2009

The EPA unveiled a new strategy to enforce drinking water laws in rural communities after hearing was called in response to an investigation that showed roughly one in five schools with their own wells violated the Safe Drinking Water Act. The EPA vowed to pay closer attention to chronic violators and said that they would ask small water systems to restructure or merge in order to improve their safety records.

<http://www.chron.com/disp/story.mpl/ap/top/all/6760078.html>

## INTERNATIONAL NEWS

### **Canadian Senate Passes Consumer Product Safety Bill**

*CHBC News*, Wednesday, December 9, 2009

The new legislation would replace a 40-year-old law that limits the ability to protect Canadians from unsafe products. Under the current law, Health Canada cannot order mandatory recalls on consumer products and instead must rely on voluntary recalls by companies. Companies are also not required to inform Health Canada of serious incidents involving their products.

<http://www.chbcnews.ca/money/Senate+passes+consumer+product+safety+bill/2322328/story.html>

### **Heavy metal: Some airborne particles pose more dangers than others**

*Environmental Health News*, Thursday, December 17, 2009

Around the world fine particles have been linked to increased hospitalizations and deaths due to cardiovascular and respiratory diseases after incidents of high exposure. New evidence is showing that some of those fine particles may be more dangerous than others. Metal particulates may put stress on lungs and the heart resulting in illnesses and death even when overall particulate levels are below the national standards.

<http://www.environmentalhealthnews.org/ehs/news/metal-particles>

### **Chemical BPA may harm developing fetus, Quebec study suggests**

*Montreal Gazette*, Wednesday, December 9, 2009

A new study from researchers at the Universit  de Sherbrooke suggests that Bisphenol A endangers the development of fetuses in pregnant women. Up until this point, research has focused on the hormone disrupting effects on infants who drink from hard plastic baby bottles containing BPA. This study raises concerns that BPA might be causing effects before birth.

<http://www.canada.com/health/Chemical%20harm%20developing%20fetus%20Study/2322801/story.html>

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*The Michigan Network for Children's Environmental Health is a coalition of health professionals, health-affected groups, environmental organizations, and others dedicated to a safe and less toxic world for Michigan's children. Through education, outreach, and*

*advocacy, we seek to protect Michigan's children from adverse impacts caused by exposure to widespread hazardous chemicals. Please visit: [www.mnceh.org](http://www.mnceh.org).*