



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

# Toxic Times

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

News Highlights from November 18, 2009 – December 7, 2009

## MICHIGAN NEWS

### **Ecology Center releases updated toxic toys database and mobile apps, calls for legislation**

*AnnArbor.com*, Wednesday, December 2, 2009

The Ecology Center of Ann Arbor has released the third annual Consumer Guide to Toxic Chemicals in Toys online. The database contains over 4,000 toys and over 5,500 products that it has tested for levels of harmful chemicals.

<http://www.annarbor.com/news/ecology-center-releases-updated-toxic-toys-database-and-mobile-apps-calls-for-consumer-protection-le/>

### **Children's toys still contain toxic chemicals**

*Muskegon Chronicle*, Tuesday, December 1, 2009

The Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act enacted last February, was passed after a recall of more than 2 million toys containing high levels of lead. However, there is a gap in the law and that could be filled by a package of bills passed by the Michigan House last May and currently waiting action in the Senate.

[http://www.mlive.com/opinion/muskegon/index.ssf/2009/12/editorial\\_childrens\\_toys\\_stil1.html](http://www.mlive.com/opinion/muskegon/index.ssf/2009/12/editorial_childrens_toys_stil1.html)

### **Herman Miller among those leading way in phasing out chemical**

*Holland Sentinel*, Monday, December 7, 2009

Lawmakers want to phase out a chemical used in electronics and home furnishings to make them harder to burn. Scientists say deca-BDE is toxic, persistent, and bioaccumulative – that it is building up in fish and can be harmful to the human body and water quality.

<http://www.hollandsentinel.com/news/x1758555711/Drive-underway-to-ban-controversial-chemical>

### **Walleye in Lake Huron's Saginaw Bay carry less PCB contamination than a decade ago**

*Great Lakes Echo*, Tuesday, November 24, 2009

A new study recently published in the Journal of Great Lakes Research says that PCB levels in Lake Huron walleye have dropped 80 percent since 1997. PCBs were used in electrical insulators, hydraulic equipment, and paint and were found to be toxic and potentially carcinogenic. The U.S. and many other countries banned PCBs in the 70's and 80's.

<http://greatlakesecho.org/2009/11/24/walleye-in-lake-hurons-saginaw-bay-carry-less-pcb-contamination-than-a-decade-ago/>

**EPA says no dioxin in tests of Bay City, Saginaw, Midland water supplies**

*The Bay City Times*, Wednesday, November 18, 2009

A second round of samples collected by the EPA has shown that water supplies from Midland, Saginaw and Bay City contain “no dioxin or furan contamination.” The testing was in response to community questions about the impact of dredging in the Saginaw River.

[http://www.mlive.com/mudpuppy/index.ssf/2009/11/epa\\_says\\_no\\_dioxin\\_in\\_tests\\_of.ht  
ml](http://www.mlive.com/mudpuppy/index.ssf/2009/11/epa_says_no_dioxin_in_tests_of.html)

**NATIONAL NEWS**

**PCBs: When Green Paint isn't so “Green”**

*Science News*, Monday, November 23, 2009

Last year scientists from the University of Iowa discovered a PCB in urban air that had never been intentionally manufactured. In the city of Chicago's air, it was the fifth most abundant PCB. One possible answer to the source has been found – paint used on interior walls and outdoor trim on homes.

[http://www.usnews.com/science/articles/2009/11/23/pcbs-when-green-paint-isnt-  
green.html](http://www.usnews.com/science/articles/2009/11/23/pcbs-when-green-paint-isnt-green.html)

**U.S. Senate Committee and Subcommittee hold oversight hearing on TSCA**

*Environmental Expert*, Thursday, December 3, 2009

The full Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works and the Subcommittee on Superfund, Toxics, and Environmental Health held a joint hearing on reformation of the Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA). EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson testified before the committees.

[http://www.environmental-  
expert.com/resultEachPressRelease.aspx?cid=4280&codi=76582&lr=1](http://www.environmental-expert.com/resultEachPressRelease.aspx?cid=4280&codi=76582&lr=1)

**Study links asthma, pollutant exposure**

*Cincinnati Enquirer*, Tuesday, November 24, 2009

New research from the University of Cincinnati reveals that indoor and outdoor pollutants work together to cause more damage to lungs than either could do on their own. Children exposed to a common indoor pollutant and traffic exhaust were six times more likely to develop wheezing by the age of three than children exposed to low levels of both types of pollutants.

[http://news.cincinnati.com/article/20091124/NEWS01/911240350/Study%20links%20ast  
hma%20%20pollutant%20exposure%20%20](http://news.cincinnati.com/article/20091124/NEWS01/911240350/Study%20links%20asthma%20%20pollutant%20exposure%20%20)

**Chemicals, pollutants found in newborns**

*San Francisco Chronicle*, Thursday, December 3, 2009

Chemicals from cosmetics, perfumes, and dozens of industrial compounds have been detected in the umbilical cords of minority infants in the United States in tests done between December 2007 and June 2008.

<http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2009/12/03/MN5I1ATVS2.DTL&type=health>

### **U of I team fears PCBs may remain cause for concern**

*Des Moines Register*, Sunday, December 6, 2009

Although PCBs have been banned in the United States since the 1970's, some research has shown that they continue to accumulate in places like Lake Michigan. A possibility being investigated is lighter weight PCBs in air.

<http://www.desmoinesregister.com/article/20091206/BUSINESS/912060321/-1/COMM07/Elbert-U-of-I-team-fears-PCBs-may-remain-cause-for-concern>

### **Fish Kills called necessary to save the Great Lakes**

*The Washington Post*, Saturday, December 6, 2009

Never before have so many fish been killed at one time. A poison called rotenone was used in the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal to kill fish while maintenance was being done on an electric barrier further downstream. The barrier is in place to keep the Bighead Asian Carp from entering the Great Lakes. Scientists and the Illinois DNR have been patrolling a six-mile long stretch of the canal looking for these fish. Local community members are concerned about the use of the poison but officials say that the threat of the carp entering the Great Lakes deems it necessary.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/12/05/AR2009120502591.html>

## **INTERNATIONAL NEWS**

### **How Europe's Discarded Computers Are Poisoning Africa's Kids**

*Spiegel International*, Friday, December 4, 2009

Discarded electronic equipment from the west often ends up in landfills near third world slums like Accra, Ghana. Children roam these wastelands to pull apart computers and sell their components as scrap. This exposes the children to toxic chemicals, heavy metals, and carcinogenic fumes.

<http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/0,1518,665061,00.html>

### **Chinese pay toxic price for a green world**

*Times Online*, Sunday, December 6, 2009

Rare earth metals are vital for the next generation of "green" technologies. The tailings from the mining of these metals must be stored for further processing. China has begun paying local villagers compensation for the loss of income due to toxic lakes like the one near Baotou in Inner Mongolia.

<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/asia/article6946038.ece>

### **Anguish lingers in Bhopal, 25 years after chemical disaster**

*Los Angeles Times*, Thursday, December 3, 2009

25 years after what has been termed the world's worst industrial accident, when 15,000 people were killed and hundreds of thousands injured, there are accusations that the area around the Union Carbide pesticide plant is still poisoning residents of Bhopal.

<http://www.latimes.com/news/nation-and-world/la-fg-india-bhopal3-2009dec03,0,4670494,full.story>

**Insect repellent linked to birth defects**

*The Sydney Morning Herald, Wednesday, December 2, 2009*

A study by European researchers has found that pregnant women who use insect repellent in the earliest phase of their pregnancy have children with increased rates of a birth defect called “hypospadias”.

<http://www.smh.com.au/lifestyle/wellbeing/insect-repellent-linked-to-birth-defects-20091202-k4xm.html>

**Toxins in toiletries harming unborn kids**

*Toronto Star, Thursday, November 19, 2009*

Two studies recently released show gender-bending chemicals can increase the risks of certain birth defects when pregnant women are exposed to a variety of different toiletries.

<http://www.thestar.com/news/gta/article/727808--porter-boys-will-be-boys-only-if-we-can-protect-them>

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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).*