



THE NEXT STEP Toward a Healthier Future

A BI-MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE SEBASTOPOL TOXICS EDUCATION PROGRAM

Thank You For Your Feedback!

Thank you to the 155 Sebastopol residents who sent in your STEP Survey cards.

We appreciate you letting us know what you think of this newsletter, how you use it, and what articles you'd like to see in the future.

So, what were your responses?

■ **84% said you find *The Next STEP (TNS)* newsletter helpful and interesting.** Your comments included: "Thank you," "I love it," "Very informative," "Great service to the community," and "The STEP newsletter is great!"

■ Of those responding about pesticide use, **47% said you use pesticides at home or work** (down from 49% last year). **Of these, 43% use only natural pesticides,** 26% use synthetic, and 31% use both.

■ We were delighted that **72% of you said that this newsletter has helped you reduce your use of toxics.** It was valuable to hear your examples of what you found useful. Readers said, for instance, that you

now avoid pressure-treated wood, "no longer use chemical drain cleaners," "use vinegar and baking soda instead of polluting cleaners," and use tea tree oil for mold. You said that you appreciated the information about toxics in perfumes; the Roundup studies showing high toxicity to frogs; the new ideas for non-toxic pest control and cleaning (including for ants and pet care); and the "good reminder" that there are alternatives. We're also pleased to hear that you're sharing this information with others.



Congratulations to everyone who is finding ways to reduce or avoid using toxics! With these choices, you're supporting a healthier environment for yourself, your family, and our community.

Thank you for your many excellent questions and ideas for future articles; you'll find answers already appearing in this issue, and in upcoming editions.

And as always we appreciate your acknowledgement of our work. We're delighted to be of assistance.

Please keep your feedback coming! Your input helps us create a newsletter that's useful for *you!*

"Great job! I really appreciate the efforts put into the newsletter."
- A TNS Reader

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"Many thanks for all the good valuable work you do!" - LF

Safer Chemicals Policy Proposed To California Legislature

Chemicals could get notably safer in California, if a new UC proposed framework is adopted by the legislature. The odds are decent that it will be, because the legislature commissioned the proposal.

Called "Green Chemistry for California," the UC report calls for a "comprehensive chemicals policy" in California that **would actively encourage industry investment in developing chemicals that are less-toxic to humans and the environment, use less energy, and produce less hazardous waste.** This is the first proposal of its kind in the U.S.

According to the report, the U.S. "has already fallen behind globally in the move toward cleaner technologies," with the European Union and others already encouraging environmentally-safer materials.

Michael P. Wilson, the report's lead author and a scientist at UC Berkeley's School of Public Health, says that California should take the lead with such a policy, **both to remain competitive and to "address a whole host of chemical problems** that are affecting health, environment, businesses, and government in the state." Unless we change "the current trajectory," he says, these problems will only keep getting worse.

According to the UC report, the U.S. currently produces or imports 42 billion pounds of chemicals *each*

See Safer Chemicals, over

Did You Know?

The Next STEP costs the City almost nothing. Created entirely by volunteer efforts, and with no added postage expense, it costs about \$60 a year plus in-house copying. This is literally a drop in the bucket of Sebastopol's \$9 million annual budget. Given the consistent evidence that common toxics are harming us all, this is a bargain for our health, now and long into the future.

STEP Needs Your Help!

Do you want to help nurture a healthier Sebastopol, while connecting with other local folks who also care about their community and the earth? You can play an essential role in getting *The Next STEP* out to your neighbors. **All for just helping lead STEP stuffings 2-3 hours every other month!** For more information, contact 823-7863 or <PDines@compuserve.com>.

Further Adventures In Healthier Housecleaning

In previous issues, we discussed the toxicity of common household cleaning products, and the easy and cheap alternatives, including vinegar, baking soda, borax, tea tree oil, and more. (All TNS issues, with a subject index, are at <www.healthyworld.org/STEPIndex.html>.)

To explore more ideas for maintaining a clean and healthy home without using toxics, check out these excellent resources.

Website

■ **Better Basics for Natural Living** <www.betterbasics.com>. This website by Annie Berthold-Bond offers information and e-newsletters on a variety of healthy living topics.



Books

■ **Home Safe Home**, Debra Lynn Dadd. "Creating a Healthy Home Environment by Reduc-

ing Exposure to Toxic Household Products." This latest book by long-time expert Dadd is readable, helpful, and thorough. You can look up your desired product, see the toxics commonly found in it, and identify alternatives to use instead. Dadd covers household cleaning products, plus home and garden pest control, beauty and hygiene products, home furnishings, building materials, food, medications, clothing, office and art supplies, and products for children and pets.

■ **Clean & Green**, Annie Berthold-Bond. A recipe book for cleaning your house "without harming yourself or the environment." After an overview of the toxics in common products and the alternative natural materials, this book gives formulas for general cleaners and air fresheners, plus ways to clean metal, furniture, floors, carpets, clothes, the bathroom, the fireplace, cars, and more.

■ **The Naturally Clean Home**, Karyn Siegel-Maier. Information and inspiring ways to use herbs in non-toxic cleansing formulas throughout your home. (See TNS IV/1 for more about using herbs to make your cleaning more healthy and fun.)

~ Patricia Dines

Safer Chemicals, continued

day – enough to fill 623,000 gasoline trucks lined up from California to Washington and back. These chemicals are causing illness in children, workers, and the general public. Over the next 25 years, the EPA expects 600 new hazardous waste sites *each day*, in addition to the 77,000 current sites, costing at least \$250 billion in cleanup efforts.

Unfortunately, say the researchers, **current federal regulations have "extensive deficiencies,"** with an "enormous" lack of toxicity information, weak and inadequate response to problems, and no vehicle for green chemistry research.

The report discusses ways that California state can address all three problems here.

"California already plays a leading role in a number of innovative areas, such as energy efficiency," said Wilson. "By acting in the near term, the state could become a global leader in green chemistry innovation."

The Senate Environmental Quality Committee will hold a hearing on this report, then convene a work group to devise a state chemicals policy.

SOURCES: <www.berkeley.edu/news/media/releases/2006/03/14_greenchemicals.shtml>, <http://coeh.berkeley.edu/FINAL_greenchemistryrpt.pdf>, <www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2006/04/03/EDG_ULIU201.DTL>.

The Dangers of Common Household Chemicals

Did you know that ...

■ Of the four million household chemicals created since 1915, **only one in five have even been tested for their adverse health effects on humans.**

■ Nevertheless, the Consumer Product Safety Commission has determined that **more than 150 chemicals commonly found in household products are known to cause cancer, neurological harm, birth defects, allergies, and numerous psychological disorders.**

■ **Ninety percent of all accidental poisonings happen at home.** More than seven million cases are reported each year – or 14,000 a day! Young children are the primary victims, with the elderly the next most affected.

■ According to a five-year EPA study, **air in the average American home has chemical contamination lev-**

els 70 times greater than outdoor air.

■ The National Academy of Sciences estimates that **15% of all Americans are multi-chemically sensitive due to chronic exposure to household and cosmetic products.**

■ **Children under ten living where home or garden pesticides are used often are 4 to 7 times more likely to get leukemia.** Childhood brain cancer has also been associated with the use of herbicides, flea collars, and indoor pesticide "bombs."

The good news is that this harm is just not necessary. Natural approaches are often easy, effective, and even cheaper. By using them you can create a home that's beautiful and healthy!

SOURCE: Statistics from *The Naturally Clean Home*, Karyn Siegel-Maier.

ABOUT STEP

The Next STEP (TNS) is published six times a year by the **Sebastopol Toxics Education Program (STEP)**. STEP is a project of the **City of Sebastopol**, implemented by local citizen volunteers. **STEP's mission** is to support city residents in reducing their toxic use and exposure, creating a healthier and safer Sebastopol for everyone.

Newsletter Editor and Layout: Patricia Dines, Email <PDines@compuserve.com>

Newsletter Editorial Team: Craig Litwin, Jim Gleaves, and Patricia Dines

Newsletter Design Concept and Logo Design: Lyn Dillin (née Bouguereau)

STEP Founders: Michael Black, Patricia Dines, Rebecca Dwan, Jeff Edelleit, Nan Fuchs, Craig Litwin, and Larry Robinson.

STEP, P. O. Box 1776, Sebastopol CA 95473
<www.ci.sebastopol.ca.us>