



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 160 Sebastopol residents who sent in your STEP Survey cards.

We appreciate hearing your thoughts about this newsletter, how you use it, and what articles you'd like to see in the future.

So, what were your responses?

■ **91% said that you find *The Next STEP (TNS)* newsletter helpful and interesting.** Your comments included: "I greatly appreciate the info," "Your newsletter is very informative," "You are doing a good job," "A great service to the City of Sebastopol," and "Thank you."

■ Of those responding about pesticide use, **53% said you use pesticides at home or work. Of these, 53% use only natural pesticides (up from 41% last year),** 16% use synthetic (down from 29%), and 31% use both.

■ We're delighted that **76% of you said that this newsletter has helped you reduce your use of toxics.** That really makes our work feel worthwhile. It's also valuable to know what specifically you've found useful. You said that this includes the information on what is toxic, the "helpful hints on non-toxic methods" for cleaning and managing your home and garden, and the "great tips for ants." One reader declared, "I'm bleach-free due to STEP's info."

Other readers also appreciated TNS as "a good reminder" and valued that

it "broadens working knowledge to decrease toxic intake for better health."

One reader even reported that the City's leadership in this arena inspired their Sebastopol townhouse complex to swear off using pesticides and herbicides in its public areas, and encourage its 27 residents to do the same. How wonderful!

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.

Also, as always, we appreciate your acknowledgment 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!*

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"Thank you, Patricia, for all your years of service educating Sebastopol about non-toxics. We are lucky to have you!"

~ A TNS Reader

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Answering Your Questions

■ **Email delivery of *The Next STEP (TNS)* newsletter?** Yes, that's available! Folks in or out of City limits can email that request to <STEP@healthyworld.org>.

■ **TNS back issues?** They're available online at <www.healthyworld.org/STEPIndex.html>, helpfully organized by topic. There's also a link to the chronological list on the City's website.

■ **What is toxic?** Common household items that are toxic and don't belong in the trash include: Insecticides, weed killers, and other pesticides; pool chemicals; batteries; many household cleaners; fluorescent lamps; nail polish and remover; wood finishes; paint and paint thinners; solvents; oil and filters; fuels; engine cleaners; and brake fluid.

■ **Proper disposal of everyday toxics?** For information about what's toxic and where to dispose of it, see the Sonoma County Waste Management Agency's site <www.recyclenow.org> and their Recycling Guide in your AT&T yellow pages. Or call them at 565-3375.

■ **Where's the Household Toxics Facility?** At the Petaluma Central Disposal Site, 500 Meacham Rd. This facility accepts a wide variety of household toxics at no cost to county residents with ID. They're open Th-Sa 7:30a-3:30p.

■ **Upcoming Sebastopol Toxics Collection Day?** Community Toxics Collections occur every Tuesday from 4-8p at various Sonoma County locations. The next Sebastopol one is July 28. To make an appointment, call 795-2025 or (877) 747-1870 at least 24 hours before the event.

■ **Battery disposal?** You can also drop some toxic items at other locations. For instance, household batteries can be dropped at Sebastopol's Whole Foods, Longs, and Sebastopol Hardware. City residents can also recycle them at Sebastopol's City Hall, Fire Department, and Library. Put them in a plastic bag, with a maximum of four per bag to prevent shorting.

Fluorescent Lightbulbs & The Mercury Debate

The public is often advised to use compact fluorescent lamps (CFLs), instead of the usual incandescent lightbulbs, in order to lower energy consumption, save money, and reduce our impact on the planet.

However, we also hear that CFLs contain trace amounts of mercury, a toxic heavy metal that can harm our brain, neurological system, liver, and ecosystems. Therefore, CFLs can't be thrown in the trash and must be brought to special drop-off points.

So, a reader asks: Are we just trading one eco-problem for another? A valid question, and one that's been passionately debated!

In the end, though, most analysts conclude that, while imperfect, CFLs are kinder overall to our health and environment than incandescents.

The Benefits of CFLs

■ **CFLs are significantly more energy efficient** than incandescents, using about 75% less electricity for the same amount of light. Lighting accounts for an estimated 20% of the average home's electricity bill, and one CFL can save over \$30 in electricity over its lifetime!

Reducing our energy use also trims energy's many serious environmental and health impacts, including global climate change and air pollution. The EPA estimates that, if each U.S. home replaced one incandescent with a CFL, we'd save enough electricity to light 3 million homes and prevent greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) equal to that of 800,000 cars.

■ **CFLs last up to ten times longer than incandescents.**

This more than offsets their higher cost, and makes fuller use of their component materials and environmental production impacts.

■ **CFLs contain a small amount of mercury (1.4-4 mg), which is sealed in the bulb** and not released in normal use and proper disposal. Most (99%) of a



bulb's materials can be reused to make new bulbs.

■ **CFLs prevent a notably higher level of mercury from being released into our air, water, and seafood.** About 50% of U.S. electricity is produced by burning coal. In 2006, this put an estimated 51 tons of mercury into our shared air. *Scientific American* calculated that replacing a 75-watt incandescent with an equivalent CFL drops related average mercury emissions from 13 mg to about 3.5 mg over the CFL's average 7500-hour lifetime. This lowers released mercury by 9.5 mg or 73%!

CFL use also significantly cuts CO₂ and other GHG emissions, and lowers coal mining's devastation.

So my conclusion is that, while I encourage the development of energy-efficient bulbs that also avoid toxics, for now CFLs offer us a simple way to trim expenses while nurturing both our health and environment.

Essential Acts

There are two key ways that we can help ensure CFLs' net benefits.

1) Dispose of CFLs properly. To keep mercury from moving into our shared environment, discard CFLs at appropriate locations. Putting them in the trash is illegal.

2) Handle bulbs carefully. If one breaks, hold your breath and open the windows to disperse the vapor. Gather the fragments in a plastic bag or glass jar, without touching them, and bring to a toxics center.

For more about mercury pollution prevention, see <www.rrwatershed.org/mercury.html>.

CFL Drop-off Sites

You can discard CFLs and other fluorescent lamps, for free, at the Sonoma County **Household Toxics Facility and Community Toxics Collections**. (Turn page over for more about these.) CFLs are also accepted at some stores, including these local options:

Friedman's • 4055 Santa Rosa Ave., Santa Rosa 588-7695
• M-F 7a-8p, Sa 7a-7p, Su 8a-7p
• *No cost; CFLs only.*

Home Depot • 100 Bicentennial Way, Santa Rosa 544-2130 • 4825 Redwood Dr., Rohnert Park 585-9200
• M-Sa 6a-9p, Su 8a-8p • *No cost; CFLs only.*

OSH • 1390 N. McDowell Blvd., Petaluma 664-1114 • M-Sa 7a-9p, Su 8a-8p • *No cost; all kinds; maximum 10 linear lamps.*

True Value Hardware • 15600 River Rd., Guerneville 869-2832 • M-F 7:30a-7p, Sa 8a-6p, Su 9a-5p • *Small fee; all kinds; limited quantities.*

Sebastopol Hardware Center • 660 Gravenstein Hwy. N., Sebastopol 823-7688 • M-Sa 7a-6p, Su 9a-5p • *Small fee; CFLs and other sizes.*

Healthy Summertime Fun

The **STEP Online Index** is overflowing with information to help you live less-toxically.

Look there for information about fending off mosquitoes without the toxic DEET repellent, keeping teenagers safe from toxics at work, and protecting our water resources by disposing of paints properly and washing the car at a carwash.

There are also tips for avoiding toxics while cleaning the house, caring for pets, freshening the air, and creating a vibrant lawn or garden. All this and more is at <www.healthyworld.org/STEPIndex.html>.

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.

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