

Consumer Education

Information for Leading a Toxic-Free Life

A Washington Toxics Coalition Campaign Fact Sheet • January 2005



Toxic Chemicals Around Us

Toxic chemicals are widely used by consumers, small businesses, and government agencies. Pesticides detected in small streams are the same ones most frequently used in the watersheds, and they threaten our salmon and other aquatic species. Indoor air contains



higher concentrations of pollutants than outdoor air, and house dust concentrates lead, pesticides, and combustion products. Children are especially vulnerable and they experience their highest risks in the home. Toxic products are widely available,

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Finding Alternatives

Alternatives are available for most toxic chemicals used in and around the home, by businesses, and by local government. Encouraging wider use of alternatives requires several steps: awareness of the problem, education about alternatives, assistance in making the switch, and ongoing support.

What WTC Has Been Doing

We use a multi-faceted approach to education, which includes researching and writing high-quality materials, answering questions via e-mail and our telephone hotline, and conducting public presentations and more in-depth workshops. We make available high-quality publications, individualized research, educational workshops in a variety of formats, ongoing consultations, model policies, and other specialized tools to assist consumers, professionals, and decision makers.

Publications

WTC produces a wealth of high-quality fact sheets and other publications highlighting alternatives to toxic chemicals. Authoritative, well researched and reviewed, and practical, the Home Safe Home series now includes 20 titles covering gardening, cleaning, hobby supplies, home projects, and more. Four additional titles are in the works. The Home Safe Home fact sheets are distributed by many local government agencies as well. *Grow Smart, Grow Safe*, our consumers' guide to gardening products, features a unique brand-name hazard-rating system, which is very popular with both consumers and professionals. We also distribute a wealth of other fact sheets, reports, tool kits, and of course our quarterly newsletter, *Alternatives*.



Our publications cover a wide range of topics.

Our Pesticide Free Zone project was launched in 2003. We distribute the attractive signs and informative fact sheets to help homeowners and institutions promote and maintain their pesticide free landscapes. See the section on the reverse for details.

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People need reliable, accurate information in order to find the ways to reduce their own and society's use of toxic chemicals. The WTC website is one way that we provide this information, and it shows many ways for individuals to help stop toxic chemicals from polluting the environment and threatening health. Since Internet access has become increasingly widespread, this is a relatively

easy way for most people to view the large quantity of information that we offer.

The website features extensive information on alternatives to the use of pesticides for controlling home and garden pests, and detailed information on avoiding use of other hazardous household chemicals and products. Also featured are sections on WTC's main campaigns, including Clean Water for Salmon, Toxic-Free Legacy, Healthy Schools, Toxics in the Home, and Toxic Waste in Fertilizer. These sections include campaign descriptions, current activities, related media, how individuals can get involved, and much more.



We display our materials at environmental and health-related community events throughout the year.

The website also features current action alerts that allow visitors to instantly send a message on an important and timely issue to the responsible policymakers. You will also find many of WTC's reports, fact sheets, newsletters, annual reports, and pesticide-reduction

action kits available as PDF files, so you can download, save, and print the specific information that you find useful. Much more is on the website, including staff and board profiles, volunteer opportunities, and a listing of upcoming community events.

Hotline: 800-844-SAFE

The Toxics Hotline serves Washington Toxics Coalition members, governmental employees, businesses, and the general public. Our information specialist responds to questions about pesticides, building-material toxics, indoor air quality, cleaning products, and other human and environmental toxics in the home and garden or from industry. We respond to inquiries in a timely manner, promoting alternatives and safer solutions. The Hotline responds to more than 2,000 information requests each year.

Pesticide Free Zone

The Pesticide Free Zone project helps homeowners, groundskeepers, landscaping

professionals, and others mark unsprayed landscapes with attractive signs. We have distributed more than 2000 signs since the project began, and they are proudly displayed in yards, at schools, and at many other locations all over the state.

The eight-inch diameter aluminum signs are permanent and have two mounting holes that allow them to be attached to a stake, fence, or wall. They come with three fact sheets: What's Wrong with Using Pesticides?, Talking to your Neighbors about Pesticides, and the Pesticide Free Zone Sign Owners Manual. Please call us to order a sign or get more information.

Volunteer Training

Volunteer programs are useful because they can supply enthusiastic, motivated, trained people to work on a variety of community projects at relatively low cost. WTC provides specialized training on pesticides and household hazardous waste to a host of local volunteer programs that focus on gardening, composting, recycling, watershed protection and restoration, and home environmental assessments.

By ensuring that participants in all of these programs understand toxics issues, we multiply our message many times over and at the same time ensure consistency and accuracy of information. Our participation in these programs also helps to keep WTC before the public, enhances our credibility, and builds membership. Programs we work with include Master Gardeners, Master Recycler/Composters, Watershed Stewards, and Master Home Environmentalists.

What You Can Do

- Avoid purchasing hazardous products for your home or workplace.
- Consult our website and publications for up-to-date information on alternatives.
- Talk to your friends and family about the choices you have made and tell them about our information resources.
- If you can't find alternatives at the stores you visit, ask the manager to stock them.
- Contact companies to complain about hazardous products they make.
- Call our Hotline (800-844-SAFE) for more information on alternatives. ■