

**INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FIRE FIGHTERS®**

HAROLD A. SCHAITBERGER
General President

VINCENT J. BOLLON
General Secretary-Treasurer

January 26, 2007

Kelly Fox, President
Washington State Council of Fire Fighters
1069 Adams Street, SE
Olympia, Washington 98501-1443

Dear Brother Fox:

The International Association of Fire Fighters, headquartered in Washington, DC, represents more than 280,000 full-time professional fire fighters and paramedics who protect 85 percent of the nation's population. More than 3,100 affiliates and their members protect communities in every state in the United States and in Canada. There are 6,500 IAFF members in the State of Washington. Our union is concerned about health and safety of our members as well as the health and safety of all our citizens. Accordingly, the IAFF believes that the passage of legislation banning brominated flame retardants (Polybrominated diphenylethers (PBDEs) including Penta-, Octa-, and Deca-BDEs) is a step in the right direction for improving the health and safety of our fire fighters and the citizens who are exposed to these

One of the primary applications of PBDE's is as a flame retardant applied onto or in many common household goods (furniture foam; plastic cabinets; computers and small appliance; consumer electronics; wire insulation; and back coatings for draperies and upholstery) to reduce and retard the amount of flame spread. While these chemicals inhibit the formation and spread of flames, they do not completely prevent fires. Unlike other flame retardants, when PBDE's burn they release dense fumes and black smoke that reduce visibility and a highly corrosive gas known as hydrogen bromide. In addition, PBDE's produce highly toxic byproducts of incomplete combustion. Although use of flame retardants saves lives and property, there have been unintended consequences. There is evidence that PBDEs persist in the environment and accumulate in living organisms, as well as toxicological testing that indicates these chemicals may cause liver toxicity, thyroid toxicity, and neurodevelopmental toxicity. Many studies involving fire fighters exposed to these and other toxic gases during active fire fighting, overhaul, and long term exposure from these chemicals penetrating protective gear, have found that fire fighters have a much greater risk of contracting cancer, heart and lung disease, and other debilitating diseases. While we support the concept of flame retardant chemicals, there are alternatives that do not contain bromine or chlorine and our much safer for fire fighters than PBDE's.



Kelly Fox
January 26, 2007
Page 2 of 2

The IAFF salutes those companies that have stopped using brominated flame retardants (such as Dell, Hewlett-Packard and Ikea) and are now using safer alternative fire retardants. These companies demonstrate that alternative flame-retardant technologies for achieving fire safety standards do exist and are readily available for other manufactured products.

Fraternally

Richard M. Duffy
Assistant the General President
Occupational Health, Safety, and Medicine

Cc: Ricky Walsh, IAFF District Vice President
Keven Rojecki, WSCFF