

Oregon Toxics Alliance's

VINYL OUT OF OREGON CAMPAIGN

- **What is Vinyl and Why is It a Problem?**
- **Where is Vinyl Found?**
- **What are Safe Alternatives to Vinyl?**



The Verdict Is In – Vinyl Is Out!

WHAT IS VINYL & WHY IS IT A PROBLEM?

Vinyl, or PVC, is a synthetic resin used to make a variety of plastic products. What sets vinyl apart from other plastics is that it is made from chlorine, vinyl chloride and other hazardous chemicals. It turns out to be one of the most harmful consumer materials ever produced.

The vinyl industry is the largest single consumer of industrial chlorine worldwide, using about 30% of all chlorine supplies. Vinyl resin is 57% chlorine by weight. When chlorine is used in industrial processes, dangerous by-products called dioxins are formed. Dioxin is highly toxic to pre-birth development of humans and wildlife, suppresses the immune system and causes a variety of cancers.

Vinyl materials can also contain heavy metals such as lead and cadmium, and plasticizers known to disrupt the human hormone system. One example is that “new car smell”—which is actually the smell of plasticizers off-gassing and exposing occupants to toxic pollutants. Vinyl in building products may be linked with human health problems such as asthma, lead poisoning, and reproductive diseases.

PVC is a poison plastic. It is destructive to human health and the environment throughout all the stages of its existence, from production, to use, to devastating pollution problems when it is landfilled or incinerated. Americans throw away as much as seven billion pounds of vinyl

waste each year that can't be safely buried, burned or reused. The resulting dioxins created by incineration of PVC continue to harm our health and environment for decades, long after we think we have been rid of it.

Where is PVC Found?

PVC is found in everyday products in our homes, hospitals, cars, as well as in toys and food and beverage packaging.

- **HOMES:** In every building we enter, we are literally surrounded by vinyl. Approximately 75% of all PVC manufactured today is used in building materials. Vinyl is used in drinking water pipes, window frames, siding, flooring, wallpaper, window blinds and shower curtains. Vinyl poses an immediate health threat during a fire by exposing fire fighters and building occupants to hydrogen chloride gas and high doses of dioxin. People exposed to vinyl in building interiors (such as vinyl flooring) have significantly elevated risks of asthma, wheezing and pneumonia.
- **HOSPITALS:** Health care products such as IV bags and tubing leach the plasticizer DEHP into whatever liquids or medicines are in the bag. In a 2002 Public Health Notification, the FDA determined developing males are at a high risk of testicular defects from

exposure to DEHP. They urged health care providers to use alternatives to vinyl medical devices used with newborn baby boys, pregnant women who are carrying male fetuses, and boys entering puberty. Hospitals typically dispose of PVC products after just one use, sending them to a medical waste incinerator. These incinerators release huge amounts of dioxin into the air, land and water, polluting local environments and global ecosystems.

- **TOYS:** Vinyl toys contain toxic plasticizers that leach, flake, or off-gas over time, increasing risks from asthma, to reproductive damage, to cancer. Children that suck on PVC teething rings, pacifiers, or toys ingest chemicals that leach from the plastic, causing damage to the brain, liver and kidneys.
- **FOOD AND BEVERAGE PACKAGING:** Just as toxic plasticizers in IV bags leach into liquids, they also contaminate foods and beverages stored or served in plastic containers. When heated in a microwave or conventional oven, the plastic off-gasses these chemicals.

OTA's Vinyl Out of Oregon Campaign is made possible through a generous grant from the Meyer Memorial Trust and the Bullitt Foundation.

THE PROBLEM: VINYL IN BUILDING CONSTRUCTION:

The problem is simply that vinyl is toxic, and yet vinyl production is increasing worldwide.

In North America alone, over ten billion pounds of vinyl were used to produce materials used in building construction. It is evident that phasing vinyl out of the building industry is critical to minimizing the dangers of needless chemical exposures from vinyl's entire production, use and disposal cycle.

WHAT OTA IS DOING:

Healthy Building Education Project

OTA is working to inform designers, builders, and other key decision makers of the health hazards implicit in vinyl's entire production cycle. Our goal is to shift the construction industry away from vinyl building materials by encouraging the use of safer alternatives whenever practicable. Those who commit to build without vinyl are leading this market transformation. The Healthy Building Education Project ultimately benefits children whose future health can be protected by smart decisions that avoid bringing unnecessary, harmful chemicals into homes, schools, and hospitals.

Habitat for Humanity

Oregon Toxics Alliance is working directly with Oregon Chapters of Habitat for Humanity to share information on ways that vinyl construction materials can contribute to indoor air problems that lead to childhood asthma. We share Habitat's desire to see that all families have equal access to healthy homes with safe materials to support childhood development. We want to help make sure that materials used

to build a home do not provoke illness.

OTA's work with Habitat for Humanity is made possible through a generous grant from the Meyer Memorial Trust and the Bullitt Foundation.

[Phasing Vinyl out of Consumer Products](#)

Children's toys and food packaging make up a significant 14% of all PVC used. OTA has joined with other national environmental health groups to promote a phase out of vinyl products that can be placed in the mouth or can contaminate food. Vinyl is a commonly used plastic found in infant toys such as soft books, teething rings and pacifiers. It is also used in many types of product packaging, including bottles, trays and plastic cling wrap. OTA and our allies are raising consumer awareness of the serious health and environmental impacts of these products so that manufacturers learn they must replace the vinyl in their products with safe alternatives.

OTA's goal of shifting the market for building materials and consumer products away from vinyl is entirely achievable. A growing number of multi-national companies such as Volkswagen, Mattel, Firestone, Honda and Nike are eliminating PVC from their products and packaging. OTA is collaborating nationwide with the Healthy Building Network, Healthcare without Harm, and the Center for Health, Environment and Justice.

*It is time to bring this preventative action to Oregon with the campaign **Vinyl Out of Oregon***

THE VERDICT IS IN . . . VINYL IS OUT!

City Planners and Fire Fighters Team Up for Vinyl-Free Construction

The City of Eugene has recently constructed two new fire stations to serve a growing population. Working together with OTA, the city planning staff and the Fire Department representatives immediately found common ground in their desire to construct a building that would provide a healthy indoor working environment.

The Fire Department wanted to ensure the quality of indoor air for the health of their employees, and to demonstrate their support for non-toxic building materials.

All involved in the project advocated for a building that followed the vinyl-free recommendation set forth by their International Fire Fighters Union.

The two Fire Station projects in Eugene demonstrate how important it is to educate project managers and other key decision makers about vinyl; once they grasp the problems caused by vinyl use, it is very likely that construction teams will strive to use safe and alternative building materials.

The International Association of Fire Fighters has expressed deep concern about the safety of firefighters whenever they battle fires that involve vinyl materials. Even long before it ignites, vinyl emits deadly gases such as hydrogen chloride which can result in serious illness and death. OTA is working with Oregon's fire fighters to help the public learn about the dangers caused by combustion of vinyl products. The President of the Eugene Fire Fighters Union and other officials have endorsed our VOO Campaign:

The Eugene Fire Fighters Union strongly supports safer alternatives to PVC building materials. We applaud the Oregon Toxics Alliance efforts to educate the public about the hazards of PVC and help to protect our community from hazardous materials.

President Gary Nauta, IAFF Local 851

CHOOSE THE SAFEST SOLUTIONS

Learn More About the VOO Campaign

OTA can help you find information on alternatives to vinyl building materials.

For information, go to www.oregontoxics.org

Collection Of Best PVC Info

The most essential info about the hazards of PVC yet published:

www.pvcinformation.org

Choose Healthy Buildings

To learn about PVC-free building materials and compare life cycle costs visit

www.healthybuilding.net

Promote Non-PVC Purchasing Policies

Propose a safe non-vinyl purchasing policy to your local government or civic groups.

For samples and tips, go to

www.safealternatives.org

PVC Disposal Report and Information Brochures

Go to the Be Safe Network website, a project of the Center for Health, Environment and Justice. You will find information on the national movement to phase out the worst toxic chemicals and switch to safer, effective and affordable alternatives. Endorse the BE SAFE Platform today at www.besafenet.com

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VOO!