CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

Department of Toxic Substances Control

News Release

T – 18 – 13
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 26, 2013

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DTSC launches pioneering Safer Consumer Products initiative

Encourages innovation and protects Californians and the environment

SACRAMENTO – The Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) today launched the first step in California's pioneering Safer Consumer Products (SCP) Initiative by publishing a list of chemicals that will be used to identify and eventually reformulate consumer products that are a potential threat to public health and the environment.

Under the new regulations, the Department will develop a set of products, called "priority products," that contain one of about 150 toxic chemicals included on the list. Manufacturers of priority products will be asked to evaluate the design of these products and to replace these chemicals with safer alternatives if feasible.

Five years in the making, the Safer Consumer Products initiative is a significant shift toward a more protective, economically viable approach in the way California ensures the safety of consumer products. And it provides an opportunity for innovative California industries to capitalize on the growing consumer demand for products that are safer and better for the environment.

The initiative, the first of its kind in the United States, is an integral part of the Brown Administration's commitment to environmental protection and expanded business opportunities.

The Safer Consumer Products initiative goes into effect October 1, 2013, and DTSC will phase it in slowly.

By April 2014, DTSC will select up to five priority products based upon such factors as the extent of their use, the potential for public exposure to the toxic ingredient, and how the products eventually are disposed. Stakeholders will have an opportunity to provide input on DTSC's selection of specific priority products since the selection will be finalized via the regulation adoption process.

Companies that want to sell these "priority products" in California will then perform "alternative assessments" to determine if viable safer versions are available.

"The program starts out small, but it sends a big message," said Debbie Raphael, DTSC Director. "Innovative and forward-thinking companies will realize the opportunities for growth that stem from this cutting-edge regulation. Smart businesses are already planning ahead, looking for alternative chemicals they can promote as less-toxic, family friendly and environmentally safe."

Today's announcement of the chemical list was made at Hero Arts Inc., a family-run manufacturer of stamping and card-making supplies that has eliminated toxic chemicals from its processes. The company is known for its green practices, including getting its power from a 68-kilowatt solar array, requiring vendors to sign a green pledge, and hand-making its stamps using North American maple from sustainably managed forests.

Aaron Leventhal, Chief Executive Officer of Hero Arts, applauded the new regulation. "The reality is this Safer Consumer Products regulation is exactly the role government should play, and is one of the best ways it can help business" Leventhal said. "Such regulations can clarify an otherwise turbulent landscape, create rules that businesses can rely on and reduce long-term risk. This is a proposal that speaks to the future."

Demand for green products has increased as consumers become more aware of potential adverse effects on health and the environment.

"This program represents a victory for public health," said Gretchen Lee Salter of the Breast Cancer Fund. "For too long, toxic chemicals have been used in everyday products with no accountability. While there is still much work to be done, this is a big step for California and we look forward to working with the administration and the legislature to ensure the program lives up to its potential."

John Ulrich, executive director of the Chemical Industry Council of California, also welcomed the new initiative.

"These hazard- and exposure-based regulations have the potential to motivate forward-leaning companies to make already safe products even safer, and simultaneously to focus on consumer products that truly pose significant or widespread adverse impacts for Californians," Ulrich said. "CICC is proud of its contributions to this effort and proud to have been invited to participate in an event marking the conclusion of this grueling regulatory development phase. We now stand ready to assist the implementation phase and help to further integrate 'green chemistry' into the world of chemical regulation."

To find out more about the regulation, visit the DTSC Safer Consumer Products website. See the list of chemicals. Video on the Safer Consumer Products initiative is available here.

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FOR GENERAL INQUIRIES: Contact the Department of Toxic Substances Control by phone at (800) 728-6942 or visit www.dtsc.ca.gov. To report illegal handling, discharge, or disposal of hazardous waste, call the Waste Alert Hotline at (800) 698-6942.

The Mission of DTSC is to protect California's people and environment from harmful effects of toxic substances by restoring contaminated properties, identifying and promoting safer ingredients in consumer products, and ensuring stewardship through enforcement, regulation and pollution prevention.