

CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY  
Department of Toxic Substances Control

News Release

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Deborah O. Raphael, Director



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healthy nail salon  
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The Campaign for Safe Cosmetics  
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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## California Report Finds Toxic Chemicals in “Toxic-Free” Beauty Products

**SACRAMENTO, CA** – Today, the California Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) released a study that reveals an unattractive side of the beauty industry, showing that many nail care products contain toxic chemicals even though their labels claim otherwise.

DTSC scientists have discovered that despite claims to be free of one or more of the “toxic-trio” ingredients - toluene, formaldehyde and dibutyl phthalate (DBP) - some nail care products sold in Northern California contain high levels of toluene and DBP. Chronic or extended exposure to these chemicals has been associated with birth defects, asthma and other chronic health conditions.

DTSC’s findings are especially critical for California’s estimated 121,000 licensed nail care technicians. Most are young Asian-American women, exposed daily in poorly ventilated salons to a variety of chemicals. California has an estimated 48,000 nail salons.

“Thousands of women and young girls buy these particular brands believing that they are safe,” said DTSC Director Debbie Raphael. “Our study shows there is a failure of some manufacturers to know what is in their products, and a failure to accurately state what is in them. These chemicals are present, sometimes in high quantities. This is a distressing pattern that we wish to highlight and work to address.”

Laboratory testing conducted on behalf of DTSC shows that consumers, nail care salons and cosmetology schools cannot rely on the “toxic-free” claims made by many nail care products.

DTSC sampled 25 nail care products from six Bay Area locations. Twelve products claimed to be free of at least one “toxic-trio” chemical. However, 10 of the 12 products contained toluene, and four of the 12 contained DBP. Some of the “toxic-free” products actually contained higher levels of DBP or toluene than products which made no toxic-free claims.

“We are alarmed by the results of this report,” said Julia Liou, co-founder of the [California Healthy Nail Salon Collaborative](#) and a public health administrator for Asian Health Services. “This is a clear signal that cosmetic manufacturers need to be held accountable for their actions. The misbranding of products is not only a major public health problem, but also interferes with a salon worker’s right to a safe and healthy work environment.”

“Women want to make informed choices, so it is disturbing to see that manufacturers are misrepresenting their products with false labeling claims. Obviously, it’s possible to make nail polish without these toxins, and that’s what all companies should be doing,” said Lisa Archer, national director of the [Campaign for Safe Cosmetics](#).

“Manufacturers that don’t get it right are putting those that do in a bad light,” said Raphael. “Manufacturers must ask themselves a basic question: ‘Is it necessary to make nail care products with these ingredients?’ Asking that question is a primary goal of DTSC’s [Safer Consumer Products Regulations](#),” Raphael said. The regulations, scheduled to go into effect in 2012, are an effort to make selected product manufacturers analyze alternatives to toxic ingredients in their products. DTSC aims to start with a small number of consumer products and promote a larger shift in the marketplace to less toxic products.

“We thank DTSC for its revealing research. This report highlights the difficulties that salon owners and consumers face in identifying safer products,” said Melanie Nutter, Director of San Francisco's [Department of the Environment](#). “Understanding these challenges, San Francisco has launched the Healthy Nail Salon program to train workers and recognize nail salons that choose safer products and practices. We are committed to ensuring that nail salon workers and consumers are protected when using nail products.”

DTSC conducted the survey in conjunction with legislation and regulations by the City and County of San Francisco to [formally recognize nail care salons that use safer nail products](#).

Read the entire DTSC report: [Summary of Data and Findings from Testing of Nail Products Collected from the San Francisco Bay Area](#).

Information about DTSC partners can be found at [California Healthy Nail Salon Collaborative](#), Julia Liou, [jliou@ahschc.org](mailto:jliou@ahschc.org)  
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***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.***