

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE TOXIC CONSUMER PRODUCTS AND INDOOR
AIR QUALITY CONFERENCE , MAY 27, 1987

Compiled by the Ecology Center of Ann Arbor
Ann Arbor, Michigan

The following ideas for changing household chemical product labeling and packaging and "Consumer Right To Know" were collected from participants at the Toxic Consumer Products and Indoor Air Quality Conference May 27, 1987, sponsored by the Ecology Center of Ann Arbor with funding from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation. Public health educators, environmental health professionals, artists, researchers and business representatives contributed to this list.

Although there was discussion on specific points there was general agreement that more informative labeling is crucial to the prevention of unnecessary exposure to hazardous household chemicals and to preventing environmentally unsound disposal.

CHRONIC TOXICITY

1. In order for consumers to obtain more information on chemical products, all containers should provide the company's name, address and phone number and indicate the availability of a Material Safety Data Sheet for the product.
2. All chemical hazard information for school products should be available to school and local community medical service providers.
3. Chronic toxicity testing should be required for all chemicals in household products. At a minimum, Ames tests should be performed for currently available and all new products. (An Ames test is a standard toxicological method for measuring the potential for certain materials to cause mutations in bacterial DNA).

INERT INGREDIENTS

4. To improve the current lack of information regarding inert ingredients, labels should provide a complete listing of active and inert ingredients, related acute and chronic toxicity warnings and precautionary statements.

SAFE USE INFORMATION

5. Specific storage instructions should be featured on all containers of hazardous household chemicals.

6. Safe use explanations should include examples such as "keep more than six feet away from heat source or open flame such as range, wood stove or furnace."

7. Directions should include specific protective equipment, ie. "wear impermeable gloves approved for use with solvents"

8. Proper use directions should be featured that may help protect the environment, such as "using more than a cup of this detergent as recommended will not improve the laundering ability of this product".

10. Labels should include color coded international symbols to assist illiterate and non-English speaking consumers. Public Service Announcements and product advertising should highlight these symbols.

11. Labels should always be brightly colored with a light background and dark lettering.

DISPOSAL

12. Companies could help to deter the unsafe disposal of toxic pesticides by sponsoring state by state pesticide waste exchanges. A toll free number could be displayed on all containers of home use pesticides.

13. Hazardous household products like oven cleaners and herbicides should only be available in single use packages.

14. Labels should carry safe use information and warnings regarding the pesticidal quality of pesticide container rinse water.

15. Directions on how to recycle, evaporate or solidify paint products should be featured prominently on the container to reduce improper disposal of paint products in landfills and city streets.

16. The message "Buy only what you need" should be carried on all household "project" products such as paint stripper and pesticides.

17. All containers of household chemicals should carry as standard information: "improper disposal may damage the environment, consult your local health agency for further information."