



For Immediate Release

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Vinyl Shower Curtains Release Toxic Chemicals

New report shows as many as 100 chemicals released from PVC shower curtains

Toronto - As many as 100 toxic chemicals associated with adverse health effects are released into the air from polyvinyl chloride (PVC) shower curtains. These chemicals make up that “new shower curtain smell” unique to PVC vinyl shower curtains and shower curtain liners, according to “*Volatile Vinyl: The New Shower Curtain’s Chemical Smell.*” The new study is released today by the US-based Center for Health, Environment & Justice (CHEJ) and in Canada by Environmental Defence and the Canadian Environmental Law Association (CELA).

Though ubiquitous in homes around the world, PVC shower curtains contain many harmful chemicals, including volatile organic compounds (VOCs), phthalates and organotins. Toxic chemical off-gassing from PVC shower curtains may contribute to respiratory irritation, damage to the central nervous system, liver and kidney, nausea, headaches and loss of coordination.

“The new shower curtain smell may be toxic to your health,” said Michael Schade, report co-author and CHEJ PVC Campaign Coordinator. “Vinyl shower curtains are contaminating the air we breathe and we need the Canadian government to take serious action on the use of PVC in consumer products,” said Dr. Rick Smith, Executive Director of Environmental Defence.

“Combined exposure to the multiple chemicals released from vinyl shower curtains is cause for concern,” said Aaron Freeman, Policy Director, Environmental Defence, “especially for children as they are more sensitive to toxic chemicals.”

The five PVC shower curtains tested in the United State by CHEJ were purchased from Bed Bath & Beyond, Kmart, Sears, Target and Wal-Mart. One brand sold at Bed Bath & Beyond was found in Canadian stores; however, most major department stores in Canada carry some variety of vinyl shower curtain. Key findings include:

- 108 different volatile organic compounds (VOCs) were released into the air from a shower curtain over a 28 day period;
- All five curtains tested in phase one contained di(2-ethyl hexyl) phthalate (DEHP) and diisononyl phthalate (DINP). These chemicals and additional phthalates are banned in children’s toys in California, Washington, and the European Union. Canada has listed only DEHP as a ‘toxic’ substance, and recommended but not implemented a ban in children’s products;

- Several chemicals found in the curtains (ethylbenzene, methyl isobutyl ketone, cyclohexanone, and DINP), are considered a human health concern under the *Canadian Environmental Protection Act*, but are not regulated.

“Not only are vinyl products contaminating our indoor air, but they release toxic dioxins during manufacturing and incineration,” said Theresa McClenaghan, CELA’s Executive Director. “The federal government has a window of opportunity to proactively regulate these chemicals with a major Bill before Parliament to amend the federal *Hazardous Products Act*.”

The results of the *Volatile Vinyl* report indicate a clear path for regulatory reform in Canada. Environmental Defence and CELA recommend that the federal government take the following steps to protect Canadians’ health and the environment:

- Ban PVC in shower curtains;
- Require that manufacturers and retailers switch to safer products, such as cotton shower curtains;
- Expand labeling rules to help consumers make safer choices;
- Declare the chemicals emitted from PVC in consumer products (including toluene, cyclohexanone, methyl isobutyl ketone, phenol, ethylbenzene, DEHP, and DINP) as hazardous indoor air pollutants and regulate their use in consumer products.

The two groups also urge provincial governments across Canada to take similar steps to protect the health of Canadians.

While waiting for the government to take action, consumers should avoid purchasing shower curtains, or other everyday products, made with PVC, and should not buy products that are not labeled for their chemical content.

The full report, *Volatile Vinyl: The New Shower Curtain’s Chemical Smell* is a free download on Environmental Defence’s Toxic Nation web site (www.toxicnation.ca) and the CELA web site (www.cela.ca).

To download broadcast quality b-roll, high resolution photos, and other resources visit the Center for Health, Environment and Justice web site (www.chej.org/showercurtainreport).

About Environmental Defence (www.environmentaldefence.ca): Environmental Defence protects the environment and human health. We research solutions. We educate. We go to court when we have to. All in order to ensure clean air, clean water and thriving ecosystems nationwide, and to bring a halt to Canada’s contribution to climate change.

About CELA: (www.cela.ca) The Canadian Environmental Law Association works on law and policy issues, in the public interest. We represent individual citizens and groups in the courts and we advocate for comprehensive laws to protect and enhance public health and environmental quality across Canada.

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