



COMMUNITY PLAYTHINGS TAKES A PROACTIVE APPROACH TO STATE CHEMICAL DISCLOSURE REQUIREMENTS

In 2011 the Washington State Department of Ecology published a list of 66 chemicals of high concern to children, and disseminated rules that required companies report if their children's products contain any of these 66 chemicals intentionally added, or as a contaminant over 100 parts per million. The list included toxic flame retardants, vinyl chloride, phthalates, bisphenol A, formaldehyde, styrene, toxic metals, solvents and many more chemicals known to harm human health. These chemicals are linked to cancer, respiratory effects and adverse impacts on learning and development.

Rather than have to report that their products contain chemicals that might expose young children to harm, Community Playthings undertook a years-long effort to reformulate these hazardous substances out of their products. This upstream approach has enabled them to state that their products are not only sustainable, but free of toxic BPA, phthalates, polyvinyl chloride and all of the chemicals of high concern to children as determined by Washington State.

Headquartered in New York state, Community Playthings designs and builds quality, durable furniture and playthings for child care environments. They manufacture and sell a variety of products - shelving, seating, cribs, tricycles, cubbies, toys, play structures and more - made from sustainably harvested wood and other safe materials. In 2011 in response to the Washington State chemical reporting rules they decided to go even further to assure that their products were the safest possible for young children by undertaking a process to eliminate all 66 chemicals of concern on the Washington list.

Prior to launching their green chemistry initiative, Community Playthings, along with the rest of the children's product industry, had reformulated many product materials to comply with the 2008 federal Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act which banned lead and several phthalates in children's toys and childcare articles. Because phthalates are a common ingredient in PVC plastic they decided to eliminate all PVC plastic materials which were mostly in flexible fabric coatings, labels, and other uses such as tricycle seats. These actions had already eliminated several of the Washington State chemicals of concern.

"When Washington State announced its chemicals of high concern to children reporting requirements, Community Playthings reviewed and updated our materials selection. We recognized that the state agency assessment was based on sound science and wanted our products to be free of these ingredients."

*- Clarence Mow,
Director of Regulatory Affairs,
Community Playthings*

Using Green Chemistry to Make Safer Products

Community Playthings developed a green chemistry plan in 2012 to eliminate the rest of the chemicals on the Washington list from their products. First up, they initiated an ambitious alternatives assessment process to replace all styrene containing materials which included acrylonitrile butadiene styrene (ABS) plastic, one of the most widely used materials in the market. At 10,000 pounds per week, ABS had comprised fifty percent of their plastic usage. ABS met all of their functional needs, but they wanted to completely eliminate acrylonitrile and styrene. Over a two-year period, the company reformulated and tested various alternatives. Through a vendor in Israel, they finally zeroed in on a custom nylon-based compound that is free of chemicals of concern, and achieves even better performance.

Because toxic flame retardants (FRs) had been frequently used in children's products containing polyurethane foam, Community Playthings also tackled elimination of all FRs in nap mats, along with specifying no use of PVC. This proved to be quite challenging, as they had to find all new vendors. However, the company met success in June of 2013, becoming the first company to offer FR-free and PVC-free nap mats.

As part of their green chemistry plan, Community Playthings also eliminated flame retardants (FR) and per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances in textiles, specifying only FR-free textiles and stain-release free fabrics for furniture. They succeeded in locating vendors in the U.S. who could meet these specifications with polyurethane coated polyester, but at a higher cost. While they had to pass along some of this increased cost, their customers are assured they are purchasing high quality, non-toxic products that will last for years. Community Playthings products come with a 10-year warranty.



Safer Product Innovation. Community Playthings' top-selling outdoor play structures for child care environments are made of rot-resistant, durable wood that is not treated with toxic chemicals. The secret is acetylation, a process which renders the wood rot and swell resistant, using acetic acid as the only post-treatment residual in the wood.

Community Playthings' proactive approach protects:

The environment.

In the process of reformulating materials to eliminate chemicals of concern, Community Playthings was able to switch most parts to cross-compatible plastics, which also significantly reduces plastic waste. They can now melt and reuse scrap plastic, achieving cost savings and reducing waste from 10% of plastic material down to 1%.

Workers.

Community Playthings is protecting the health of their workers by eliminating chemicals such as formaldehyde in their manufacturing process. The use of compatible materials prevents inadvertent cross contamination when materials depolymerize to produce toxic gases, a health hazard, and potential explosion risk.

Children.

Quality child care includes a safe and healthy physical environment to protect the developing brains and bodies of young children from inadvertent exposures to toxic chemicals in building materials, furniture and toys. Community Playthings helps create non-toxic child care environments by eliminating known hazardous chemicals from their products.

**More Information at: saferstates.org, gettingready4baby.org, communityplaythings.com
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