

## Create a Healthier Work Place: Kicking Toxic Chemicals Out of Your Office Furniture

Choosing furniture without toxic chemicals can **improve air quality** in your buildings; improve employee, visitor and community health; and **reduce costs**. It can also help you achieve valuable credits toward **LEED Certification**, and **shift the market** toward safer furniture. CEH is excited to assist you in this process and has resources to accommodate your organization's specific needs. Find out more below.

### 1. Furniture is a major source of exposure to toxic chemicals:

Furniture is an unexpected reservoir of toxic chemicals. These chemicals can migrate out of furniture, accumulating in dust, affecting the quality of our indoor air, and finding their way into our bloodstreams. The key chemicals of concern in furniture include: **1) flame retardants 2) volatile organic compounds (VOCs) including formaldehyde, 3) fluorinated compounds used as stain- or water-resistant treatments, 4) polyvinyl chloride (PVC), and 5) antimicrobials.**

### 2. These chemicals are associated with serious health effects:

Exposure to these toxic chemicals has been associated with **serious health consequences** such as decreased fertility, cancer, hormone disruption, reduced IQ, diabetes, high cholesterol and obesity.<sup>i,ii,iii,iv,v,vi,vii,viii</sup> In some cases, these chemicals can cause health problems, not only for those who are initially exposed, but also for **future generations who may never be directly exposed to the chemical.**<sup>ix,x</sup>

### 3. Choosing healthier furniture is cost-neutral and can save you money:

Flame retardant-free furniture is more affordable than furniture that contains these chemicals. Adding flame retardants costs money, and industry experts report that flame retardants degrade foam more quickly and make for a less comfortable "sit." Increased longevity equals cost savings. Furthermore, furniture without flame retardants protect us from fires **without the additional cost** that comes with adding these chemicals. Avoiding fluorinated stain treatments and antimicrobials can also reduce the cost of furniture you buy for your facilities.

### 4. These chemicals often do not work as advertised:

Government studies have consistently shown that **furniture foam treated with flame retardants does not protect us from fires.**<sup>xi,xii</sup> There is also no data to support claims that antimicrobials added to furniture reduce the spread of infection.<sup>xiii</sup> As knowledge about

chemicals of concern grows, it becomes increasingly clear that they are **often unnecessary**.

## 5. There are many healthier furniture options that you can choose from:

**Leading manufacturers** are offering products without the toxic chemicals of concern we identify above.<sup>xiv,xv</sup> Both small and large companies selling a wide range of product types and lines have already transitioned to healthier furniture made without chemicals of concern. Please contact CEH if you would like to see options for healthier furniture.

## 6. Making the transition to healthier furniture would be a major success for sustainability:

Purchasing furniture without toxic chemicals can help you create a **healthier and more sustainable workplace**, and it makes a great success story for your annual report. Purchasing healthier furniture can also help you **obtain points toward LEED certification**.

## 7. Large organizations and companies have already moved the market away from toxic flame retardant chemicals. We can advance this work, and move the market away from other chemicals of concern:

By choosing furniture without these unnecessary and toxic chemicals, you would be **joining leading organizations** who signed CEH's purchaser pledge such as Kaiser Permanente, LinkedIn Corporation, The Honest Company, the City and County of San Francisco, the City of Portland, HDR Architecture, Perkins + Will, Genentech, Hackensack Meridian Health System, University of California at Santa Cruz, Multnomah County and others who have already committed to purchasing furniture without toxic flame retardant chemicals.<sup>xvi</sup> By leveraging your organization's purchasing power, your institution can **help lead the movement to shift the market** to healthier furniture.

## 8. The Center for Environmental Health is here to help you every step of the way:

CEH provides resources and tools, informational webinars, data and technical assistance at **no cost** to help you join this important sustainability effort. If you have any questions or would like help plotting your next steps, please contact Judy Levin via email: [judy@ceh.org](mailto:judy@ceh.org) or phone 510-655-3900 ext. 316



## Sources

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