



# BE SAFE

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## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Microsoft Completes Phase Out of PVC, “the Poison Plastic”**

***HP, Crabtree & Evelyn, Kaiser Permanente, Catholic Healthcare West, Wal-Mart, and Others Join the Trend Towards Phasing Out PVC in Consumer Packaging and Products***

(Washington, DC) Microsoft, along with Kaiser Permanente, Crabtree and Evelyn, and others, announced they have joined the fast-growing ranks of major corporations demonstrating concern about the environmental health impacts of their products or packaging by phasing out PVC plastic (polyvinyl chloride or vinyl). Hazardous chemicals are used and released in this commonly used material, the second highest selling plastic in the world. Studies show links between chemicals created and used during the PVC lifecycle and cancer, reproductive and immune system damage, and asthma.

A coalition of 60 organizations coordinated by the Center for Health, Environment & Justice (CHEJ [www.chej.org](http://www.chej.org)) worked with these companies to convince them to eliminate PVC packaging or products voluntarily, thereby helping build markets for safer substitutes. Health Care Without Harm works with healthcare institutions to promote safer substitutes to products such as PVC plastic in health care. The Healthy Building Network is leading the campaign to accelerate the transition away from PVC building materials in favor of safer, healthier alternatives.

New PVC phase-out developments include the following:

- Microsoft announced that by the end of 2005 it will have completed its PVC packaging phase out, which has already resulted in the elimination of 361,000 pounds of PVC since July, 2005.
- Crabtree & Evelyn, an international manufacturer and retailer of personal care products, toiletries, home fragrance products and fine foods, has announced it will phase out PVC in its packaging. Crabtree & Evelyn has already begun to phase out PVC in existing and all new product lines, and is developing a complete PVC phase out timeline.
- Kaiser Permanente, the largest non-profit health care system in the US, has announced phasing out PVC wherever possible in millions of square feet in new construction to be built over the next decade. Kaiser vendors have developed PVC-free wall protection products and PVC-free carpeting.

Other recent PVC phase-out announcements include the following:

- Catholic Healthcare West, a healthcare system with 40 hospitals, announced on November 21, 2005, it awarded a five year, \$70 million contract to B.Braun to supply CHW with PVC-free and DEHP-free IV systems.
- HP announced on November 1, 2005 that it plans to eliminate its remaining uses of PVC as safer alternatives are available. The company has removed PVC from all external case parts. In correspondence with HP, they noted that they will be out of all PVC packaging in two months. The Computer Take Back Campaign has worked with HP and other electronic companies to replace PVC and other harmful materials of concern with safer alternatives.
- Wal-Mart announced on October 24, 2005, it will phase out PVC in its private label packaging over the next two years. Environmental health advocates welcomed Wal-Mart's PVC phase out however stressed it's only a small step, and the company needs to address major outstanding environmental and labor concerns.
- Firestone Building Products Company, the world's largest manufacturer of commercial roofing, closed down their PVC line in late 2005 in favor of safer materials. This represents some six thousand tons of PVC production annually.
- Shaw Industries Inc. ran its last production of PVC carpet backing at the beginning of 2005, replacing it with EcoWorx, a cradle-to-cradle product that can be sustainably recycled, has less embodied energy than PVC carpet tiles, and maintains equal or greater performance.
- Johnson and Johnson announced it has set a goal to eliminate PVC in their primary packaging, and is actively engaged with suppliers to identify alternatives to replace existing PVC packaging and avoid PVC use in future products.

### **A New Multi-Industry Trend**

These companies join the ranks of other innovators who have already moved to phase out PVC including Adidas, Aveda, Bath and Body Works, the Body Shop, Gerber, Honda, Ikea, Lego Systems, Nike, Samsung, SC Johnson, Shaw Carpet, Toyota, Victoria's Secret, Volkswagen, and Volvo, among others. They are part of a broader economic trend in which US businesses are increasingly incorporating safer, sustainable materials into their operations.

"We are seeing a new trend: major corporations are phasing out PVC and switching to safer and healthier consumer products," said Lois Gibbs, the housewife-turned-activist who led the community effort to relocate hundreds of families away from the infamous Love Canal toxic waste site, and who went on to found CHEJ. "We applaud Microsoft and other innovative companies who recognize that safeguarding our health is not only the right thing to do, but also makes good business sense. Consumers need to support companies that have demonstrated commitments to safer products. Parents should remember the adage 'bad news comes in threes,' and avoid buying PVC products which are marked with a "3" or "v" in the recycle symbol this holiday season."

"As part of our continuing efforts toward global environmental stewardship, we have eliminated PVC from all Microsoft packaging effective December 31, 2005," said Pamela Passman, vice president of corporate affairs for Microsoft. "The long term environmental effects of PVC are well known, and we are proud that our efforts have eliminated an estimated 361,000 pounds of PVC packaging since July of this year alone. In 2004 we set a goal to eliminate PVC in packing by the end of 2005, and, together with partners such as The Center for Health, Environment and Justice, we have achieved this important step toward protecting our natural resources."

A comprehensive national report, *PVC: Bad News Come in Threes* released by CHEJ, the Environmental Health Strategy Center, and the national BE SAFE coalition last year as part of a kick off campaign to convince companies to eliminate PVC is available at [http://www.besafenet.com/PVCDisposalReport\\_2-Column\\_R6.pdf](http://www.besafenet.com/PVCDisposalReport_2-Column_R6.pdf).

## **The Poison Plastic**

PVC is the worst plastic from an environmental health perspective, dangerous throughout its entire life cycle of production, use and disposal. Consumers can identify it by looking for the number “3”, “PVC” or the letter “V” inside or underneath the universal recycling symbol. In addition, soft flexible PVC products often have a distinct odor, such as vinyl shower curtains.

When produced or burned, PVC plastic releases dioxins, the most potent synthetic chemicals ever tested, which can cause cancer and harm the immune and reproductive systems. Studies have shown plasticizers such as phthalates have migrated out of PVC consumer products, exposing people to toxic additives linked to reproductive defects and other health problems. Our bodies are contaminated with toxic chemicals released during the PVC lifecycle, such as mercury, dioxins, and phthalates, which may pose life-long health threats.

A 2005 report from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention found eleven of twelve phthalates tested were higher in children than adults (<http://www.cdc.gov/exposurereport/>). A study published in the Environmental Health Perspectives (EHP) journal in August, 2005 demonstrated for the first time a strong link between a mother’s exposure during pregnancy to phthalates and adverse effects on the male reproductive system (<http://ehp.niehs.nih.gov/docs/2005/8100/abstract.html>). These changes were seen at phthalate levels below those found in one-quarter of the female population of the United States. Most recently, Danish medical researchers published a new study in EHP on September 7<sup>th</sup>, 2005 finding that 3-month-old boys exposed to higher levels of phthalates through breast milk produced less testosterone than baby boys exposed to lower levels of the chemicals, suggesting the human testis may be vulnerable to phthalate exposure during development (<http://ehp.niehs.nih.gov/docs/2005/8075/abstract.html>).

PVC cannot be effectively recycled due to the many toxic additives used to soften or stabilize PVC, which can contaminate the recycling batch. In fact, just one PVC bottle can contaminate a recycling load of 100,000 PET bottles. Safer, cost effective alternatives are readily available for virtually every use of PVC. From safer plastics, to bio-based materials, there is a growing market for substitutes for hazardous PVC products.

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To view letters from Microsoft and other companies phasing out PVC, or to access the PVC Fact Sheet and national PVC report, visit [www.besafenet.com/phaseout.htm](http://www.besafenet.com/phaseout.htm)

**NOTE TO EDITORS AND PRODUCERS – Representatives of Microsoft and other companies phasing out PVC, as well as representatives of CHEJ, BE SAFE and other environmental groups working to phase out PVC are available for interviews now. To request interviews, call Stephen Kent, Kent Communications at 845-758-0097**