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## **2009 Research Finds 1 in 3 Toys Still Contain Lead, Cadmium, Arsenic, or Mercury**

### **Lead Decreasing While Other Toxic Chemicals Persist, Finds Third Annual Consumer Guide at [www.HealthyStuff.org](http://www.HealthyStuff.org)**

(Minneapolis, MN) – The Minnesota-based Healthy Legacy coalition, along with the Ecology Center, a Michigan-based nonprofit organization, today released the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Consumer Guide to Toxic Chemicals in Toys at [www.HealthyStuff.org](http://www.HealthyStuff.org). Researchers tested nearly 700 popular 2009 children’s products for lead, cadmium, arsenic, PVC, and other harmful chemicals in time to help consumers make better choices for their families this holiday shopping season.

According to researchers at HealthyStuff.org, who have tested more than 4,000 children’s products over the past three years, lead has been steadily decreasing in toys. ***In fact, the number of products with lead exceeding current federal standards for lead in toys (300 ppm) decreased by 2/3 (67%) since 2007.*** However, one in three of all toys tested (32%) this holiday season still contained one or more harmful chemicals including lead, cadmium, arsenic, and mercury. In addition, 18 percent of the products tested this holiday season (119 of 669) still contained detectable lead, including the Barbie Bike Flair Accessory Kit, Dora the Explorer Activity Tote, and the Kids Poncho from WalMart. PVC, a ‘worst in class’ plastic because of life cycle concerns, is still present in 42% of children’s products.

“The toxic chemicals that we find are a fraction of the thousands of chemicals that can be present in everyday products, including those intended for children,” said Jeff Gearhart, the Ecology Center’s lead researcher, who founded HealthyStuff.org. “We need a major overhaul of our chemicals policies immediately to start phasing out these dangerous substances.”

This year at HealthyStuff.org, holiday shoppers can search for toys by product name, UPC code, product type, manufacturer, or retailer to easily find products that have No, Low, Medium, or High levels of toxic chemicals. Also available is a personalized holiday wish list that can be sent to family and friends, blog-friendly widgets in English and Spanish, a mobile application, and quick searches for toy rankings via SMS texting in English and Spanish.

#### **Highlights from the HealthyStuff.org 2009 findings:**

- **Safe Toys are Possible** – Many manufacturers are already doing it: two-thirds (68%) of the products tested in 2009 did not contain any lead, cadmium, arsenic, or mercury, including many made in China. These results show that manufacturers can make toys free of unnecessary toxic chemicals. 58% of children’s products were made without PVC.

- **Lead Declining But Still in Toys** – Lead was detected in 18% (119 out of 669) products tested by HealthyStuff.org this year. In 2007, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommended a level of 40 parts per million (ppm) of lead as the maximum that should be allowed in children's products. Seven percent (44) of this year's toys tested at levels above 40 ppm. Three percent (17) of this year's products tested at levels above 300 ppm, the federal recall standard used for lead material substrates in children's products.
- **It's Not Just Lead** – Other dangerous chemicals are still found in toys. One-in-three (32%) of toys tested this year contained one or more of the hazardous chemicals tested for by HealthyStuff.org. Of those, cadmium was found at levels greater than 100 ppm in 3.3% of products (22 of 669 total products). Arsenic was detected at levels greater than 100 ppm in 1.3% of products (9 of 669 total products).
- **Many Plastic Toys Still Made of PVC** – HealthyStuff.org identifies products made of PVC by measuring their chlorine content. 42% of toys tested this year contained PVC. This percentage has remained constant for the past three years. PVC is the worst plastic from an environmental health perspective because it creates major hazards in its manufacture, product life, and disposal and can contain additives that are dangerous to human health. Lead, cadmium and other heavy metals are also commonly added to PVC products.

To sample the toys, HealthyStuff.org experts used a portable X-Ray Fluorescence (XRF) analyzer that identifies the elemental composition of materials. This accurate device has been used by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to screen packaging; the Food & Drug Administration (FDA) to screen food; and, by many State and County Health Departments to screen for residential lead paint.

Today, the U.S. Senate Environment & Public Works Committee will hear testimony from three key federal agencies about the need to reform the Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA) – the obsolete law passed in 1976 to regulate chemicals. To date, the EPA has required testing on only about 200 of the more than 80,000 chemicals that have been on the market since the law passed 33 years ago. Senator Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ) and Representative Bobby Rush (D-IL) are expected to introduce a new bill soon to reform this outdated law.

“We have been around the state over the last few years talking to Minnesota parents and they are concerned. They shouldn't have to worry about whether the toys they buy contain harmful chemicals like lead or cadmium,” stated Kathleen Schuler, Co-Director of the Healthy Legacy Coalition. “The time is now for strong reform of our toxic chemical laws and we need Senators Klobuchar and Franken to lead the way.”

**About HealthyStuff.org** – HealthyStuff.org is based on research conducted by environmental health organizations and other researchers around the country. The Ecology Center created HealthyStuff.org and leads its research and development. The Ecology Center is a Michigan-based nonprofit environmental organization that works at the local, state, and national levels for clean production, healthy communities, environmental justice, and a sustainable future.

**Healthy Legacy** is a diverse public health coalition with thirty member groups that promotes healthy lives by supporting the production and use of everyday products without toxic chemicals. We advocate for consumer education, business leadership and protective policies to advance safe alternatives in Minnesota. For more details on Healthy Legacy's work, visit us at [healthylegacy.org](http://healthylegacy.org) or follow us on twitter at [twitter.com/HealthyLegacy](https://twitter.com/HealthyLegacy).

**\*\*\*ATTENTION JOURNALISTS: B-Roll, hi-res Graphs, Charts and Photos are available. This press release and selected HealthyStuff.org materials are available in Spanish. Please call Peter Starzynski at 612-870-3476 for more information. \*\*\***