

# Variety of house chemicals toxic, study says

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Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — Americans are exposed to a variety of potentially dangerous chemicals in their homes from products such as computers, frying pans and shower curtains, according to a new study released yesterday.

The study, called "Sick of

Dust," found 35 hazardous industrial chemicals in household dust samples from 70 homes in seven states, including California. It was commissioned by nine environmental groups, including the Center for Environmental Health in Oakland and the Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition in San Jose.

"It literally brings home the fact that hazardous chemicals are

in our daily lives," said Beverly Thorpe, international director for Clean Production Action, one of the study's sponsors. "We feel now is a prime opportunity to overhaul chemical regulation in the United States."

The researchers tested the dust samples for six types of chemicals, including pesticides and flame retardants. All the chemi-

cals are legal, but many are known to be harmful to immune, respiratory, cardiovascular and reproductive systems. They said infants and young children are especially vulnerable to exposure.

But the American Chemistry Council, which represents major chemistry companies, said that

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## STUDY: Variety of chemicals found in homes called toxic

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just because a substance is found in dust or in the body at low levels doesn't necessarily mean it causes health problems.

"The report sounds scary, but breaks no new ground," the council said in a statement. "The benefits of chemistry have helped us all live longer and healthier lives. These advances should not be underestimated or undermined by scare tactics."

The study's backers said they decided to test dust samples in U.S. homes after seeing similar studies that found high levels of toxic chemicals in households in Europe, where lawmakers are tightening regulation of chemical production.

They said they hope the test results will help prompt state and federal legislation to curb the use of dangerous chemicals in the production of household goods, ranging from furniture and clothes to carpets and nail polish.

"I'm concerned and outraged that our government isn't protecting us from toxic chemicals," said Angela Grattaroti, a mother in Leominster, Mass., who participated in the study. "We have a right to have safety in our homes. It's inexcusable to subject our children and our families to a harm that can be avoided."

The study mentioned Dell, IKEA, Herman Miller and Shaw Carpets as companies that have switched to cleaner chemical alternatives in their products.

The other states involved in the study were New York, Michigan, Washington, Oregon, Massachusetts and Maine.

### DUST SAMPLES

Chemicals found in samples tested for the study, "Sick of Dust: Chemicals in Common Products — A Needless Health Threat in Our Homes."

**Alkylphenols:** Found in laundry detergents, textiles, hair-coloring, paints and all-purpose cleaners. These chemicals are widely recognized to mimic natural estrogen hormones leading to altered sexual development in some organisms.

**Organotin Compounds:** Found in PVC (polyvinyl chloride) water pipes, PVC food packing materials, glass coatings, polyurethane foams and other consumer products. These chemicals can disrupt the hormone, reproductive and immune systems.

**Perfluorinated Organics:** Used to make Teflon, Goretex and other oil-, water- and stain-resistant materials for nonstick frying pans, utensils, stove hoods, stain-proof carpets, furniture and clothes. These chemicals have been shown to damage organ function and sexual development in lab animals.

**Pesticides:** Applied in and around homes for controlling infestations of various insects and used in carpets. Pesticides include a wide range of chemicals. Some are associated with cancer, reproductive effects and birth defects, and many are toxic to the nervous system.

**Phthalates:** Used primarily in vinyl (PVC) products such as shower curtains, raincoats, toys, furniture and flooring. These chemicals disrupt reproductive systems in animal studies. They have been linked to asthma and respiratory problems in children.

**Polybrominated diphenyl ethers (Brominated Flame Retardants):** Applied to textiles or incorporated into plastics, foams and electrical goods to prevent or slow the spread of fire. These chemicals build up in the body and persist for long periods of time in the environment.