Article 33, paragraph 2 of REACH requires companies to let customers know, upon request, if a product they are selling contains a hazardous chemical. They can be found in all kinds of everyday consumables ranging from toys and clothes to electrical equipment, furniture, kitchenware, baby care, DIY and home improvement, or office supply products.

The new EU chemicals legislation, called REACH, is one instrument to address this problem. In June 2007, REACH entered into force and is legally binding in all 27 EU member states.

As shoppers, we now have the opportunity to change the way consumer products are manufactured.

One of the positive aspects of REACH is that it gives consumers the right to find out about hazardous chemicals in everyday consumer products.

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Perfluorinated Chemicals (PFOS, PFOA)---------------------
kitchenware (Teflon & non-stick products), outdoor wear & water repellent clothing, food containers

Bisphenol-A------------
baby feeding bottles, water bottles, electrical and electronic goods, i.e. CDs

Watch out for these hazardous chemicals in consumer products!

A list of such hazardous chemicals, also called substances of very high concern, should become available in autumn 2008 on the website of the new EU Chemicals Agency (ECHA), who is co-ordinating the implementation of REACH. But we do not have to wait until then. We can start asking about hazardous chemicals in consumer products now!

Brominated Flame Retardants (Deca BDE, Penta BDE)---------------------
PCs, notebooks, mobile phones, TV sets, irons, mattresses, carpets, furniture, wires, textiles, lightning

Phthalates (DEHP)-------------
cosmetics, fragrances, children’s toys, furniture, carpets, furniture, lubricants, wood finishing, toys, hangtags, baby changing, electronics, electronic appliances

Perfluorinated Chemicals (PFOS, PFOA)--------------------
many products are now water repellent clothing, food containers

Bisphenol-A

Phthalates (DEHP)

- chemicals that cannot break down (persistent)
- chemicals that build up in the human body over time (bio-accumulative)
- chemicals that cause cancer (carcinogenic)
- chemicals that cause miscarriages or damage the foetus (reprotoxic)

The company is then legally obliged to give us information about the presence of hazardous chemicals in the product within 45 days after the request was made. As consumers we can thus play a key role in making sure companies and retailers finally start selling products free of hazardous chemicals.

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More resources on REACH:
www.reach.eu.org
http://ec.europa.eu/echa/

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