

Coalition of Retailers, NGOs to Adopt Safer Alternatives Policy

A coalition of businesses and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) has developed an initiative to promote the widespread adoption of the use of safer chemicals in consumer products. The group includes office products retailer Staples and health care organization Kaiser Permanente, as well as environmental groups.

The coalition, Business-NGO Working Group for Safer Chemicals (New York), will build on decisions by several major retailers to voluntarily stop selling products that contain certain hazardous substances, the group says (CW, April 21, p. 26). "This came in response to increasing demand from consumers, investors, and governments for chemicals that have low-to-no toxicity and that degrade into innocuous substances in the environment," the groups says. A complete list of businesses that have signed on to the initiatives is set to be released on October 29th, the group's official launch date.

The group's objectives include: crafting a "transition agenda" for moving away from petroleum-based materials to sustainable bio-based/bio-derived materials; developing tools and continuous improvement criteria for moving to safer chemicals and sustainable materials; advancing policy initiatives that accelerate the development and use of safer chemicals and sustainable materials; and transforming markets to safer chemicals and sustainable markets by, for example, aligning purchasing criteria across sectors.

The coalition will also issue a set of guiding principles for businesses to use for implementation of safer chemicals.

"The Guiding Principles for Chemicals Policy mark a significant step toward incorporating green chemistry into consumer goods," says Roger McFadden, v.p./Product Science and Technology and Chief Science Officer for Corporate Express, a subsidiary of Staples. "Companies who sign on are demonstrating a commitment to creating products that are better for public health and the environment," McFadden says.

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