



## Operational Excellence

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# Kaiser Permanente Joins Business, Environmental Coalition to Promote Safer Chemicals

**Kaiser Permanente is part of the Business-NGO Working Group for Safer Chemicals, which recently met to champion ways that businesses and organizations can promote the use of safer chemicals in consumer products**

Kaiser Permanente gathered with a coalition of business leaders and environmental groups on Oct. 29 in New York City to promote the development and use of safer chemicals and more sustainable materials.

Spearheaded by the nonprofit environmental organization Clean Production Action, the "[Business-NGO Working Group for Safer Chemicals](#)" group includes corporate representatives from the electronics, food, health care and building sectors, in addition to several non-governmental organizations. As a first step, the group released a joint statement entitled "Guiding Principles for Chemicals Policy," which outlines a path for businesses to promote safer chemicals in consumer products.

"Kaiser Permanente supports efforts to promote the use of chemicals that are not harmful to human health," said Kathy Gerwig, vice president of Workplace Safety and Environmental Stewardship Officer at Kaiser Permanente. "The efforts of the Business-NGO Working group are helping to achieve this important goal."

The group's new "Guiding Principles" lay out four steps for businesses to encourage the use of safer chemicals. They are:

- Know and disclose product chemistry. Manufacturers should identify substances used in a product across its lifecycle, while purchasers should request product chemistry data.
- Assess and avoid hazards. Businesses should use the least hazardous chemicals and set priorities for eliminating chemicals of highest concern.
- Commit to continuous improvement. Businesses should create a framework for regular reviews of product and promote the use of chemicals, processes and products with inherently lower hazard potential.
- Support public policies and industry standards that further the first three steps.

"Kaiser Permanente has had a long standing focus on the provisioning of products that have less of an environmental impact than those containing chemicals of high concern," said Dean Edwards, vice president and chief procurement officer at Kaiser Permanente. "We are proud to support the Business-NGO Working Group."

For example, the organization worked with carpet manufacturer Tandus in 2000 to encourage the development of a new type of carpeting that is free of polyvinyl chloride, commonly known as PVC, and also appropriate for use in health care facilities. This "greener" carpeting now can be found in several Kaiser Permanente medical centers and is available to other organizations as well.

Other participants in the Business-NGO Working Group include: Corporate Express, Hospira, Inc., Catholic Healthcare West and Whole Foods, in addition to nonprofit organizations such as Health Care Without Harm, Healthy Building Network, Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy and ChemSec. For more details on the effort and a complete list of participants, go to [www.BusNGOWorkGroup.org](http://www.BusNGOWorkGroup.org).