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New “Guide to Safer Chemicals” Will Help Businesses Move Away from Chemicals of High Concern in Products & Supply Chains

Staples, Construction Specialties, Dignity Health, Kaiser Permanente, Shaw Industries, Interface, Novation, & Perkins+Will Among Many Companies to Use First-of-Its-Kind Tool

[*The Guide to Safer Chemicals*](#) was released today by a broad coalition of groups working to replace chemicals of high concern with safer alternatives. This first-of-its-kind tool sets benchmarks for how manufacturers, retailers and purchasers can track their progress to using chemicals in products that are safer for human health and the environment.

“This practical, easy-to-use guide is intended to revolutionize the way companies are able to move away from hazardous chemicals and replace them with safer alternatives,” said Dr. Mark Rossi, Co-Chair of BizNGO and lead author of *The Guide*. “Today’s business leaders recognize that comprehensive programs for safer chemicals are essential to innovation, informed decisions, and clear communication with suppliers.”

Every week new scientific research links exposure to chemicals of high concern in products to the increasing incidence of serious chronic health problems, including asthma, childhood cancers, infertility and learning and developmental disabilities. The uncertainty surrounding the safety of chemicals is eroding consumer confidence in a wide range of products.

The Guide is a how-to-resource for implementing the visionary BizNGO Principles for Safer Chemicals, which are: 1) Know & Disclose Product Chemistry; 2) Assess & Avoid Hazards; 3) Commit to Continuous Improvement; & 4) Support Public Policies & Industry Standards.

The Guide was released today at the 7th annual meeting of BizNGO, a coalition formed in 2006 that includes over 500 leaders from businesses, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), universities, and government agencies. Some of the companies that have endorsed the BizNGO Principles include: Staples, Hewlett-Packard, Dignity Health, Kaiser Permanente, Construction Specialties, Novation, Perkins+Will, Shaw Industries, Seventh Generation, Method, and Premier. Some of the endorsing NGO’s include: Health Care Without Harm, Center for Environmental Health, Breast Cancer Fund, Ecology Center, Clean Water Action, Clean Production Action, and Healthy Building Network.

“Leading companies from electronics manufacturers to retailers to health care providers are highly motivated to purchase inherently safer alternatives to chemicals of high concern,” said Rossi. “Such steps offer new market opportunities by positioning U.S. businesses to meet emerging global consumer demands and be far ahead of any regulation.”

More Background on “The Guide to Safer Chemicals” and the BizNGO Principles:

The Guide is a practical tool for all downstream users of chemicals (purchasers, retailers and product manufacturers) to benchmark their progress toward safer chemicals use. A simple hiking analogy of four benchmarks—Trailhead, Base Camp, High Camp and Summit—illustrates a company’s progress in implementing the Principles.

Based on industry best practices, the BizNGO Principles set the following four goals:

#1: Know and Disclose Product Chemistry: Companies need to know the chemicals in their products and supply chains and set goals to disclose this information to the public.

#2: Assess and Avoid Hazards: Once companies or suppliers know the chemicals in their products or processes, they evaluate them, identify chemicals of high concern, and implement programs to substitute chemicals of high concern with safer alternatives. Buyers work with suppliers to implement this principle.

#3: Commit to Continuous Improvement: Companies set goals and publicly report on their progress to achieving these goals, which include endorsing the four BizNGO Principles and establishing a corporate chemicals policy.

#4: Support Public Policies and Industry Standards: Companies advance the implementation of the above principles in public policies and industry standards. Goals include: Publicly presenting their work on implementing the principles; Integrating implementation of the principles into industry standards and other voluntary initiatives; Collaborating with NGOs on implementing the principles; and Engaging in public policies -- regulations and legislation -- that support implementing the principles.

What Companies Are Saying About *The Guide*

“*The Guide* establishes clear steps for building a meaningful program for developing and adopting better materials, and we have found it to be helpful in communicating across the supply chain how to implement a green chemistry program,” said Helen Holder, Materials Manager at Hewlett-Packard.

“*The BizNGO Guide* is a much-needed, pragmatic resource for how businesses can start on the path to safer chemicals,” added Roger McFadden, Vice President and Senior Scientist at Staples. “We welcome this much needed addition of the chemicals element to the sustainability equation.”

“At Dignity Health we strive to align our purchases with our mission and values. We piloted the beta version of the Guide and found it tremendously helpful in implementing our chemicals policy,” said Mary Ellen Leciejewski, Ecology Program Coordinator at Dignity Health. “We are committed to benchmarking our progress, working with suppliers, and engaging in public policy initiatives that support human health and the environment.”

"We need a clear set of metrics for benchmarking progress of our suppliers in offering safer alternatives to chemicals of concern to human health or the environment," said Kathy Gerwig, Vice President, Employee Safety, Health and Wellness and Environmental Stewardship Officer at Kaiser Permanente. "The BizNGO Principles succinctly express our own goals and we welcome the release of this how-to-guide."

"Managing chemicals in products requires a systematic approach and constant attention to changing materials, consumer demands, and emerging science on the hazards of chemicals," said Howard Williams, Vice President and General Manager at Construction Specialties. "The Guide is the how-to-resource on how to succeed in managing chemicals in products and across supply chains."

"As a specifier of products, I welcome a clear set of metrics for evaluating the progress of products and companies to safer chemicals," emphasized Peter Syrett, Senior Urban Designer/Sustainable Advisory Services Leader for Perkins+Will. "I look forward to using The Guide as resource for identifying best practices in disclosure, assessment of hazards, and selection of safer alternatives."

"The combination of The Guide and the GreenScreen for Safer Chemicals provides a comprehensive framework for managing chemicals in products," said Troy Virgo, Director of Sustainability & Product Stewardship at Shaw Industries. "We look forward to assessing our work in relation to The Guide and working with BizNGO to improve the value of The Guide over time."

"*The BizNGO Guide* provides us with a rational framework for understanding how to manage chemicals as a downstream user," highlighted Jennifer Waddell, Senior Clinical Manager at Novation. "We look forward to working with suppliers on how to benchmark their progress."

"We applaud The Guide for providing a step-wise framework for managing chemicals in products across supply chains," said Mikhail Davis, Manager of Strategic Sustainability (West) at Interface. "The Guide is practical in that it recognizes it is a journey, and often a challenging one, to reach the summit of Mount Sustainability."

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