









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### Sears U.S. Congratulated for Phasing Out Toxic Chemical *Environmental Defence hopes Canadian Sears stores will follow U.S. lead and phase out PVC*

Toronto – Environmental Defence congratulated Sears Holdings (Sears and Kmart) stores in the U.S. today for agreeing to phase out toxic PVC plastic in their stores. PVC plastic, commonly called vinyl, is a major source of lead, phthalates and dioxin exposure, all of which are associated with potential adverse health effects.

The move was sparked by a national U.S. campaign by the Center for Health, Environment and Justice (CHEJ) together with a coalition of health and environmental organizations. Sears and Kmart join Wal-Mart, Target and other retailers in reducing and phasing out PVC in products and packaging.

“We applaud Sears’ decision to get rid of PVC plastic from its stores. It’s a tremendous step forward in protecting consumers’ health,” said Dr. Rick Smith, Executive Director, Environmental Defence. “We hope that affiliated Sears stores in Canada soon follow suit.”

“When you mention Sears to someone, especially at Christmas time, it elicits memories of the Sears catalogue and toy shopping; Sears holds a place in America’s collective memory,” said Lois Gibbs, founder of the Center for Health, Environment & Justice. “It is fitting, right, and proper then, that Sears Holdings has been willing not only to recognize the potential dangers and harm caused by some of the products it currently sells, but has made the right decision to begin ridding its stores of this toxic PVC material.”

Recent reports indicate that the world stock of PVC in use contains 3.2 million tons of lead. Lead can damage the brain and nervous system, cause behavior, learning and developmental disabilities, and decreased IQ. Previous testing has detected lead in a broad range of PVC consumer products including toys, lunchboxes, baby bibs, jewelry, garden hoses, mini blinds, Christmas trees, and electronics.

A report released last week ( <http://healthytoys.org/home.php>) found that almost half of all toys tested are made out of PVC, which often contain phthalates. Exposure to phthalates has been linked with premature birth delivery, early puberty in girls, impaired sperm quality and sperm damage in men, genital defects, and reduced testosterone production in boys. Over ninety per cent of all phthalates are used in PVC products and are often found in toys such as rubber duckies and bath books. Here in Canada, the House of Commons recently passed a private member’s bill to ban three phthalates used in cosmetics and children’s products.

Environmental Defence has been working on the issue of toxic chemicals and health through its national Toxic Nation campaign which has measured the levels of toxic chemicals in the bodies of Canadians, including federal and provincial politicians. Full test results are available on the Toxic Nation web site ([www.toxicnation.ca](http://www.toxicnation.ca)). Sears Holdings’ announcement follows closely behind Mountain Equipment Co-op’s decision to stop selling some products that contain another harmful chemical, bisphenol A.

For a complete list of Sears’ PVC policy and plans visit: [www.searsholdings.com/](http://www.searsholdings.com/). For in-depth details on the U.S. PVC Campaign to prevent toxic harm in the retail industry: [www.besafenet.com/pvc](http://www.besafenet.com/pvc).

About Environmental Defence ([www.environmentaldefence.ca](http://www.environmentaldefence.ca)) Environmental Defence protects the environment and human health. We research. We educate. We go to court when we have to. All in order to ensure clean air, safe food and thriving ecosystems. Nationwide.

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