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**Toxic Chemicals in Furniture and Other Consumer Products:
Prominent Scientists Raise Concerns about Flame Retardants**
Historic statement identifies serious health hazards, questions fire safety benefits

(San Antonio, Texas, USA) 145 prominent scientists from 22 countries signed a first-ever consensus statement documenting health hazards from flame retardant chemicals found at high levels in home furniture, electronics, insulation, and other products. **The San Antonio Statement on Brominated and Chlorinated Flame Retardants**, which documents how this pervasive class of chemicals is likely to cause serious health harm and limited fire safety benefit, posted today in *Environmental Health Perspectives*.

Dr. Linda Birnbaum, Director of the **National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences**, and **Dr. Ake Bergman**, **Stockholm University**, Sweden, wrote in an accompanying op-ed for EHP, “Adequate toxicity information is lacking but the data indicates that the group contains compounds that are carcinogenic, mutagenic, reproductive and developmental toxicants, neurotoxicants, and endocrine disruptors.” Birnbaum and Bergman added, “Uncontrolled burning and dismantling/recycling of electronic waste in developing countries results in contamination and formation of brominated and chlorinated dioxins and furans, which are highly toxic substances that increase concern both for the health of individuals and for the environment”

While a global ban on some brominated flame retardants is proceeding under the Stockholm Convention, manufacturers’ replacement chemicals that may be just as harmful. The San Antonio Statement supports the development of safer alternative chemicals and innovative changes in the design of products to achieve fire safety.

“The sad fact about the flame retardants in our couches is that their over-all benefit in reducing fire deaths has not been proven. They can burn in seconds, and then increase fire toxicity and hazard,” said **Arlene Blum, PhD**, executive director of the **Green Science Policy Institute**. “They are used at high levels because of an outdated California regulation, Technical Bulletin 117, which has become a de facto national standard. We can have improved fire safety without toxicity. It’s time to change this obsolete policy.”

“The San Antonio Statement provides a clear summary of scientific concerns about this class of substances,” said **Joe DiGangi, PhD**, **International POPs Elimination Network (IPEN)**. “Now we need to translate this scientific consensus into regulatory actions that protect human health and the environment in all countries.”

To read the statement and for more info:

Environmental Health Fund: www.environmentalhealthfund.org

Green Science Policy Institute: www.greensciencepolicy.org

International POPs Elimination Network (IPEN): www.ipen.org