

Are 'Safest' PBDEs Really Safe Enough?

Bacteria in the soil can transform Deca-BDE, the most commonly used flame-retarding PBDE in the U.S., into more toxic forms that could be harmful to humans, according to a new laboratory study published on the Web site of the American Chemical Society journal, Environmental Science & Technology. The finding, by a team of environmental engineers at the University of California, Berkeley, implies that current and planned bans of the most toxic forms of PBDEs may be ineffectual if the less toxic forms are rendered more toxic when released into the environment. In 2004, U.S. manufacturers reached a voluntary agreement with the EPA to stop making and selling penta-BDEs and octa-BDEs, two potent forms of PBDEs linked to health problems in animals.

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