



**Press Release  
April 18, 2005**

## **Pressure Mounts to Maintain Ban on Deca-BDE**

**A New report on substitutes for the brominated flame retardant chemical, deca-BDE, increases pressure on European Commission to maintain ban on April 19<sup>th</sup> vote in Technical Adaptation Committee (TAC).**

Today, the European Public Health Alliance - Environment Network (EEN), Clean Production Action and Health Care Without Harm increased the pressure to maintain the ban on the brominated flame retardant deca-BDE, commonly used in consumer electronics, by releasing a comprehensive review of available safer substitutes for the controversial chemical. The TAC is set to vote Tuesday, April 19<sup>th</sup> on an amendment to the RoHS directive that would allow manufacturers to continue using deca when restrictions on other sister PBDE flame retardants enter force in July 2006.

The new report<sup>1</sup> concludes that cost competitive alternatives are now commercially available in both of deca-BDE's primary end uses: electronics and textiles. In the case of electronic enclosures the substitute resin systems and flame retardants are well known and manufacturers in Europe are familiar with these systems. In the case of textiles the use of substitute chemically applied flame retardants and inherently ignition-resistant fibres makes deca-BDE substitution possible.

The report follows on the heels of the EU independent environmental science panel, the Scientific Committee on Health and Environmental Risks, which two weeks ago

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<sup>1</sup> Decabromodiphenylether: An Investigation of Non-Halogen Substitutes in Electronic Enclosure and Textile Applications. LCSP, University of Massachusetts. Available at <http://www.sustainableproduction.org/proj.clea.publ.shtml>

rejected an UK risk assessment's conclusion that no further controls are needed to limit risks posed by the chemical.

Genon Jensen Director EEN. *“To un-ban deca in all of its uses for electronic goods when we know there are substitutes available, as outlined in this new report, would be a blatant disregard for citizens’ health, not to mention complete negligence of the rule of law and our EUs institutional procedures.”*

The Commission’s proposal to un-ban the chemical also faces a possible legal challenge by the European Parliament who last week voted unanimously to adopt a resolution claiming that the Commission has exceeded its implementing powers in attempting to revise the RoHS Directive. The Swedish Government has also written to the Commission claiming that the *“Proposed exemption for DecaBDE in polymeric applications in the RoHS-directive goes beyond the legal power of the Commission.”*

*“Why is the Commission pursuing this path of resistance?”* asks Beverley Thorpe of Clean Production Action, a US based group which commissioned the report by the University of Massachusetts. *“Even the World Health Organization has recommended that ‘brominated flame retardants should not be used where suitable replacements are available’<sup>2</sup>. But these recent actions by the Commission resemble Bush-style politics on the environment rather than the more progressive policies we expect to see come out of Europe.”*

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<sup>2</sup> World Health Organization’s International Program on Chemical Safety, Environmental Health Criteria 205: Polybrominated dibenzo-p-dioxins and dibenzofurans .