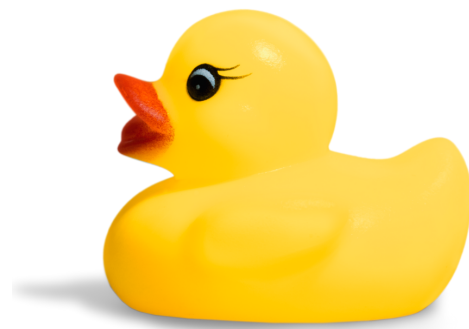


NEWS RELEASE

Beyond Plastics and Hip Hop Caucus Call on EPA to Ban Vinyl Chloride



Organization Launches a Public Petition Urging EPA to Act

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Today, on the same day that the U.S. Senate is holding a hearing on the toxic train disaster in Ohio, Beyond Plastics and the Hip Hop Caucus launched a petition urging the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to ban vinyl chloride, a known human carcinogen used almost exclusively to make polyvinyl chloride plastic, also known as PVC plastic or vinyl.

Five of the train cars that derailed in East Palestine, Ohio, on February 3, 2023 contained vinyl chloride. The train company, Norfolk Southern, and Ohio state regulators then drained the vinyl chloride into a ditch and lit it on fire to prevent the train cars from exploding on February 6, 2023. Unfortunately, burning vinyl chloride (or PVC plastic or vinyl) may create and release dioxins, a serious persistent organic pollutant.

“The toxic train derailment should be a wakeup call to the American public: Vinyl chloride is an unnecessary and dangerous threat to our health, and it’s past time for the EPA to ban this known carcinogen from drinking-water pipes, packaging and toys our children chew on,” said Judith Enck, president of Beyond Plastics and former EPA Regional Administrator under President Obama.

Some companies have already said they will eliminate the harmful chemical in their products. In January 2022, the U.S. Plastics Pact (a group endorsed by 100 major consumer companies, including Walmart, Target, Unilever, Keurig Dr Pepper, General Mills, and more) made a voluntary commitment to stop using polyvinyl chloride in their plastic packaging by 2025.

Dioxins settle on soil and dust and enter air and water, putting people at risk of inhalation and consumption of dioxins. PVC is also a threat to the health of firefighters, when buildings catch fire. Since 2002, almost two out of three firefighters who died in the line of duty died of cancer, according to the International Association of Fire Fighters.

Dioxins are spread by wind and water and persist in the environment for long periods of time, entering the food chain via soil and water. Dioxins are stored in body fat and can move from one species to the next, becoming more concentrated and harmful with each step up the food chain.

Although the burning of vinyl chloride that took place in East Palestine was a chilling example of the threat vinyl chloride poses to Americans, this toxic chemical has been impacting human health for many decades. Many of the vinyl chloride and PVC production facilities in the United States are in Texas, Kentucky, and along an 85-mile stretch of the Mississippi River in Louisiana, where local residents are predominantly Black and low income. Rates of cancer in the area are so much higher than the American average that this corridor has become known as “Cancer Alley.”

“The EPA is well-aware of vinyl chloride’s risks — so much so that it banned its use in refrigerants, aerosol propellants, drugs, and cosmetics in 1974. If it’s too dangerous for hair spray, why is it safe for our kids’ rubber duckies? There are safer alternatives to the PVC plastic that vinyl chloride is used to make,” Enck concluded.

Although banning vinyl chloride has been discussed for more than 40 years, it is still widely used in piping, building materials, packaging, children’s toys, and many consumer products. Some other hazardous chemicals used in plastic products have been restricted. For example, phthalates — chemical additives that make PVC plastic more durable — have been restricted from children’s toys in the United States, the European Union, and other nations.

To sign the petition urging the EPA to ban this toxic chemical and protect Americans, visit: <https://www.beyondplastics.org/actions/ban-vinyl-chloride>

About Beyond Plastics

Launched in 2019, Beyond Plastics is a nationwide project that pairs the wisdom and experience of environmental policy experts with the energy and creativity of grassroots advocates to build a vibrant and effective movement to end plastic pollution. Using deep policy and advocacy expertise, Beyond Plastics is building a well-informed, effective movement seeking to achieve the institutional, economic, and societal changes needed to save our planet and ourselves, from the negative health, climate, and environmental impacts for the production, usage, and disposal of plastics.