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WWF biomonitoring report confirms no risk to human health from brominated flame retardants

WWF has released a report today, entitled **Generations X: Results of WWF's European Family Biomonitoring Survey**. Despite their alarmist rhetoric, the report releases data that confirms the results of long-standing EU risk assessments: that there is no consumer health risk from the three main brominated flame retardants: TBBPA, HBCD and Deca-BDE. However, WWF's political statements seem to be at odds with the scientific data.

On pages 21 and 53 of the study, WWF reports a median level of "0" for TBBPA, HBCD and Deca-BDE for all of the families tested. Furthermore, even the maximum levels detected are extremely low (in parts per billion) and tens of thousands of times below any level of concern as established by EU risk assessments. By way of example, a part per billion is roughly equivalent to one second per 32 years¹.

"This news brings further confirmation that the use of TBBPA, HBCD and Deca-BDE does not pose any health risks" states BSEF Chairman, Dr Raymond Dawson. "We hope that WWF will now lower the volume of their alarmist rhetoric and work with BSEF to ensure that consumer products continue to receive the highest level of fire safety protection which brominated flame retardants offer."

WWF claims that no adequate health and safety data exists on brominated flame retardants. In fact TBBPA, HBCD and Deca-BDE have either completed or are currently undergoing risk assessments by the EU authorities, a process which represents the most comprehensive evaluation of chemicals. In particular, for Deca-BDE, a 10-year risk assessment, covering 588 different studies, has been concluded with EU experts not identifying any risks to health². This is also the case for TBBPA, where the EU has just finalized their health risk assessment.

BSEF is committed to informing the public and policymakers on the scientific evidence supporting brominated flame retardants. Brominated flame retardants are credited with saving thousands of lives every year, and could save many more if other governments followed the initiative of the UK and Irish governments to apply regulations demanding high fire safety standards in furniture and other household products³. Most recently, flame retardants were credited with helping to save 309 lives in the Air France August 2005 crash in Toronto, Canada, by delaying the cabin fire enough to allow all passengers to evacuate the plane wreck⁴.

¹ See <http://bsef.com/glossary/>.

² http://ecb.jrc.it/esis-pgm/esis_reponse.php?LANG=en&FROM=LISTE_EINECS&ENTREE=214-604-9

³ http://portal.surrey.ac.uk/portal/page?_pageid=799,434945&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL

⁴ <http://www.newscientist.com/channel/mech-tech/mg18725123.200> and <http://www.cnw.ca/en/releases/archive/August2005/05/c7654.html>

BSEF is the international organisation of the bromine chemical industry, whose remit is to inform stakeholders and commission science on brominated chemicals such as flame retardants.