



greenpeace european unit  
rue Belliard 199, 1040 brussels  
t +32 2 274 1900 f +32 2 274 1910  
www.eu.greenpeace.org

## **MY TOXIC VALENTINE: GREENPEACE FINDS SUSPECT CHEMICALS IN PERFUMES**

**Brussels, 10 February 2005** -- Wearing perfume exposes us to chemicals that can enter the body, aren't easily broken down and may have unwanted health effects, according to a report published today by Greenpeace International [1].

The report, 'Eau de toxines', describes how 36 well-known perfumes were tested for two potentially hazardous man-made chemical groups: phthalate esters and synthetic musks [2]. Current legislation fails to regulate our exposure to these chemicals, contained in cosmetics and a host of other products.

"We want to show our love on Valentine's Day, not expose our partner to hazardous chemicals," said Helen Perivier of Greenpeace International. "Perfume should be a pleasure to give and to wear, not a source of chemical build-up in our bodies."

Virtually all perfumes tested contained phthalates and synthetic musks. Very high levels of one phthalate (diethyl phthalate, DEP) were found in Calvin Klein's Eternity for women (22 299 mg/kg, or 2.2% of total weight) and Jean Paul Gaultier's Le Mâle (9 884 mg/kg, just under 1% of weight). In contrast, Gloria Vanderbilt's Vanderbilt contained no detectable level of any of the phthalates tested.

High total levels of synthetic nitro- and polycyclic musks were found in Cartier's Le Baiser Du Dragon (45 048 mg/kg, or 4.5% by weight) and The Body Shop's White Musk (94 069 mg/kg, or 9.4% of total weight). By contrast, levels of nitromusks and polycyclic musks were lowest in Puma's Puma Jamaica Man (0.1 mg/kg).

Studies have shown that DEP rapidly penetrates the skin and becomes widely distributed around the body following each exposure. The chemical is rapidly converted in the body to monoethyl phthalate (MEP), which is suspected over possible effects on the DNA of sperm and contributing to restricted lung function in men.

Synthetic musks can concentrate in living tissues. Some may interfere with the hormone communication systems of fish, amphibians and mammals, and exacerbate the effects of exposure to other toxic chemicals.

The findings have prompted Greenpeace to start meeting perfume manufacturers to discuss a phase-out of hazardous chemicals. Since the presence of these chemicals is rarely indicated on packaging, the public cannot choose to avoid them.

Help is at hand with the proposed EU regulation on chemicals (REACH) [3], which could require industry to phase-out problematic chemicals and substitute them for safer alternatives. However, the proposal has suffered from intense lobbying by the chemicals industry and US government. Greenpeace believes REACH will only provide true protection from chemical hazards when it puts the substitution principle into effect. This means evaluating a chemical on its intrinsic hazards and replacing it with a safer alternative whenever possible.

The widely-acknowledged problems with current regulations highlight the difficulty, if not the impossibility, of quantifying human and environmental exposure to these chemicals, and consequently of determining “risk” and acceptable exposure. With perfumes, for example, our exposure is often repeated through applications over days, months and years and may be further increased by exposure to other consumer products [4].

“Our loved ones deserve a toxic-free future,” said Helen Perivier. “Requiring the mandatory substitution of hazardous chemicals through REACH is the best opportunity we have to deliver that future.”

- Greenpeace will deliver a Valentine’s card and a copy of the report to every Member of the European Parliament on Monday. For card, see <http://activism.greenpeace.org/documents/perfumecard.pdf>

**For further information, contact:**

Helen Perivier, Greenpeace International Toxics Campaigner, tel +32 (0)496 127107  
Katharine Mill, Greenpeace European Unit Media Officer, tel +32 (0)496 156229

**Notes**

[1] ‘Eau de toxines’ report available at <http://eu.greenpeace.org/downloads/chem/GPperfumereport.pdf>. The report is based on a study commissioned by Greenpeace from independent Dutch laboratory TNO: <http://www.greenpeace.org/tnoperfumereport> Peters, Ruud, (2005) “Phthalates and artificial musks in perfumes,” R&I-A 2005-011, TNO Environment and Geosciences, Department of Environmental Quality, Netherlands. <http://www2.tno.nl/tno/>

[2] Phthalate esters are used in cosmetics as a solvent, a vehicle for fragrances and other ingredients and as an alcohol denaturant (to make it undrinkable). Synthetic musks are aromatic compounds, used in place of more expensive natural musks.

[3] REACH: Registration, Evaluation and Authorisation of Chemicals, was proposed in 2003 and is currently being discussed by EU member states and the European Parliament. Environmental and health groups and a number of progressive companies are supporting calls for chemical substitution to be a key requirement of the new legislation.

[4] Other Greenpeace investigations have reported on the content of undesirable chemicals in a wide range of consumer products, including textiles, electronic products and cleaners: <http://www.greenpeace.org/chemproreport> and <http://www.greenpeace.org/addproducts>.

Greenpeace has also reviewed the actions and policies of several product manufacturers to evaluate their use of and measures to eliminate hazardous chemicals (in English at <http://www.greenpeace.org.uk/Products/Toxics/>, in French at [www.vigitox.org](http://www.vigitox.org), in Dutch at [www.lichaamzondergif.nl](http://www.lichaamzondergif.nl), and in Spanish at <http://archivo.greenpeace.org/toxicos/html/home.html>). While some companies are making innovative changes to phase out and substitute hazardous chemicals, the lack of response of other companies to environmental and health concerns reinforces the need for legislation.