Introduction

This report provides an overview of children's health in North America and key factors that affect children's health, including exposure to toxic chemicals. It identifies what toxic chemicals might be particularly important in relation to children's health. It tracks releases of those toxic chemicals that are reported in the US and Canadian Pollutant Release and Transfer Registries (PRTRs). The report focuses on certain lists of chemicals, specific individual chemicals, with some forward-looking recommendations for action. This is not a report on risks, but rather is focused on sources of chemical industrial release as one important part of the puzzle. Chemicals from industry are only one type of pollutant; other sources are beyond the scope of this report.

Background

The mandate to prepare this report came from the CEC Council Resolution (02-06), in its adoption of the CEC's Cooperative Agenda for Children's Health and the Environment in North America in June 2002. Item 3.2 of the Cooperative Agenda calls upon the Secretariat to prepare a report on toxic chemicals and children's health and the environment. The Secretariat commissioned a study, undertaken by consultants and guided by the Council appointed Expert Advisory Board on Children's Health and the Environment (EAB). The first draft was prepared and distributed to the parties in early 2004. It was put out for public comment in the spring of 2004. Comments were received from stakeholders and the parties. In addition, the parties identified a group of experts to review the report and provide comments. A meeting of these experts was convened in November 2004. Subsequently, the report has been redrafted taking into account the public comments and the advice of experts. Contacts for the key people in the parties, the EAB and the Experts are attached for information.

Current Status

The revised draft report was sent to the experts and parties in mid-June (in all three languages) for a six week review period. Any additional comments will be reviewed and the report modified accordingly. It is anticipated that a final report will be available for publication by late fall 2005.

Overview of the Report

The report analyzes, from a children's health perspective, publicly available Pollutant Release and Transfer Register (PRTR) data. It focuses on children up to the age of 18 years. Exposure to chemicals prior to birth can also be important to a child's future development, and so are discussed in this report.

The report is arranged in the following way:

- Chapter 1 describes the demographics and major causes of death, illness and disability for children in North America
- Chapter 2 describes the sources, pathways and health effects of chemicals
- Chapter 3 analyzes industrial pollutant release and transfer data for carcinogens, developmental toxicants and neurotoxicants, and other chemicals of concern to children's health
- Chapter 4 describes examples of current programs to prevent and reduce children's exposure to chemicals and provides an overview of recommendations for actions to reduce releases of and prevent exposure to toxic chemicals

For More Information

An extended version of this project description is available on the CEC website at <www.cec.org/children>.

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