



New HBO Docudrama recycles misinformation on Flame Retardants

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HBO, the American television network, aired the docudrama “Toxic Hot Seat” on November 25, 2013. This docudrama recycles misinformation that has been seen in news coverage over the last few years. In response to the film, the Bromine Science and Environment Forum ([BSEF](#)) would like to share the following information:

[Fire safety](#) is an important issue across the world. The International Association of Fire and Fire Rescue Services estimates that every year 76,000 to 165,000 people die in a fire around the world¹. The docudrama “Toxic Hot Seat” ignores that the data shows fire is a real threat to family safety. It dismisses the research that shows flame retardants can help slow the spread of fire and save lives^{2,3} and creates dangerous misperceptions about the safe use of flame retardants.

Unfortunately, this film presents an often-repeated, overly simplistic, and misinformed view of the very diverse range of substances used as flame retardants. These are families of many different chemical substances with a variety of properties, for each of which it is important to look at the scientific assessment before making general statements; contrary to what is being done is this documentary.

This docudrama also paints an incomplete and distorted picture of current regulation in the US. The fact is that more than a dozen federal laws govern the safe manufacture and use of flame retardants. All new flame retardants must be rigorously evaluated by the Environmental Protection Agency before manufacture. This is also the case in other parts of the world where strict chemical management regulations, such as REACH in Europe, have been put in place to examine substances currently used as flame retardants as well as those coming through the research and development pipeline on their way to commercialisation.

The members of BSEF are committed to making information about their fire-prevention technologies available to the public, enhancing cooperation with regulators and working with other manufacturers and retailers to support the safe manufacture and use of everyday products. As an example, through its voluntary programme, VECAP⁴, the industry has made extensive efforts to control flame retardants emissions into the environment, both at production site and downstream users’ level.

We encourage the public to visit flameretardantfacts.com to learn more and make an informed judgement about fire safety.

¹ http://www.ctif.org/sites/default/files/ctif_report17_world_fire_statistics_2012.pdf

² Blais Matthew, “The Utility of CA TB 117, Does the Regulation Add Value?”, Southwest Research Institute, 2012

³ University of Surrey for the UK Department of Trade and Industry (DTI): “Report on Effectiveness of furniture and furnishing (fire) (safety) regulations 1988”, 2000

⁴ <http://www.vecap.info/>