



## Misleading coverage of recent Lancet study

*The Lancet* recently published a review on “*Neurobehavioural effects of developmental toxicity*”<sup>1</sup> which discussed six different classes of chemicals, including polybrominated diphenyl ethers (PBDEs). The study received media coverage, much of which was misleading and overlooked fundamental scientific principles. In response to some of these news articles, which suggested that flame retardants in general are neurotoxic, the Bromine Science and Environment Forum (BSEF) would like to share the following information:

The authors of the review state that experimental evidence suggests some PBDEs “*might be neurotoxic*”. However, they acknowledge that attribution of relative toxic potentials to individual PBDE congeners is not yet possible. Many of the reporters covering the study failed to mention this crucial fact. Some news coverage extends this mention of PBDEs in the review to all flame retardant chemicals. Flame retardants are a family of around 140 different chemical substances with different properties. It is unscientific and incorrect to attribute properties of one substance to an entire family of chemical substances.

The BSEF member companies voluntarily stopped producing and selling most PBDEs. The legacy PBDEs commercial Octa-BDE and commercial Penta-BDE were voluntarily phased-out by BSEF member companies in 2004, before they were banned. The only commercial PBDE used today, Deca-BDE, has been voluntarily phased out in the US and Canada. The European Union, Canada, Australia and the US have all completed assessments on various flame retardants at various times, some as recent as last year. These assessments assure the safety of flame retardants in their intended uses today.

Member companies of BSEF take health and environmental issues very seriously. One of the main aims of BSEF is to commission science on brominated flame retardants and bromine in order to ensure that its products are safe for both human health and the environment. BSEF, as one of the organisations which represents a significant portion of the industry, is strongly in favour of thorough sound scientific assessment of all chemical substances including those used as flame retardants. All BSEF member companies are fully compliant with national regulations in all markets where its member companies operate. We have a long history of working with regulatory agencies around the world as together we examine the current substances used as flame retardants.

We encourage you to visit <http://www.bsef.com/science> to find out more and make an informed judgement about brominated flame retardants. Please do not hesitate to contact Mayssa Badr on [Mayssa.Badr@bm.com](mailto:Mayssa.Badr@bm.com) or +32 (0) 2 743 66 98 with any questions you may have about this complex and beneficial family of products.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.thelancet.com/journals/laneur/article/PIIS1474-4422%2813%2970278-3/abstract>