



WVE

WOMEN'S VOICES FOR THE EARTH

(WVE) is a national women-centered environmental health and justice organization based in Montana. WVE works to eliminate and reduce environmental toxins that impact human health and to increase women's participation in environmental decision making.

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Concerned Consumers Spur Eco-Cleaning Movement

Nationwide Green Cleaning Parties Raise Awareness of Toxic Chemicals

NEEDHAM, Mass.— Starting today, people across the country will host parties to teach friends and family how to make their own “green cleaners” from ingredients they know are safe and non-toxic. Women's Voices for the Earth (WVE), a national environmental health group, is using the first day of spring and National Poison Prevention Week (March 16 – 22) to inform consumers that the cleaners they buy may not be as safe as they think.

“For many people, springtime means deep cleaning,” says Dori Gilels, executive director of Women's Voices for the Earth. “But some of the products consumers rely on to create a clean, healthy environment can actually lead to long-term health problems.”

WVE released a report last summer, “[Household Hazards](#)” that found that several chemicals in common household cleaning products have been linked to reproductive and developmental problems, and even asthma, the most common serious chronic childhood disease, according to the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute.

More than 100 people, from Florida to Hawaii, have already pledged to host green cleaning parties in their communities as part of a grassroots movement to reduce exposure to toxic chemicals in the home. The green cleaning party movement will go beyond the ritual of spring cleaning, with hundreds more parties expected in towns and cities across America through the rest of the year.

Alexandra Gorman Scranton, director of science and research at WVE says that a growing body of research shows that even minute traces of certain chemicals found in everyday products, like household cleaners, can potentially disrupt hormones, interfere with development and lead to disease. According to Gorman Scranton, “There's no reason to include toxic ingredients, even in trace amounts, in products that consumers use on a daily basis when safe and equally effective alternatives exist.”

Several studies have shown that regular household vinegar, which is one of the main ingredients in WVE's homemade recipes, is as effective or nearly as effective as commercial cleaners in eliminating microbes like E.coli from surfaces and sponges, effectively eliminating between 90-98 percent of bacteria.

Green cleaning party kits developed by WVE provide party hosts with everything they need to have a successful event, including recipe cards, environmentally friendly cleaning tips, an informational DVD, and advocacy information on how to contact local policy makers and cleaning product manufacturers. All homemade recipes have been tested by both consumers and professional cleaners and were found to be economical and just as effective as their branded counterparts.

"I think it should be the manufacturer's responsibility to prove that a product is safe, not the consumer's" says Tracey Rooney, who is hosting a party in her home in Needham, Mass. If there's concern about the health impacts of certain chemicals, I would hope that those chemicals wouldn't be used in products we come in contact with, until safety can be assured."

Currently, household cleaning companies are not required by law to list ingredients on product labels. When asked by WVE in writing in July of 2007 to disclose this information, many of the leading manufacturers said they could not reveal trade secrets. Yet, food companies have to label ingredients despite their need to protect "secret recipes." This system works well in alerting shoppers to ingredients they wish to avoid, for allergy reasons or otherwise.

"There's so much excitement around green cleaning parties because people are concerned and confused about reports of toxic chemicals in products that they once trusted were safe," says Gilels. "Until companies come clean about what they use in their products, we are encouraging people across the country to make their own."

WVE works directly with cleaning product companies to promote full disclosure of ingredients on product labels, and advocates for better government regulation of toxic chemicals in consumer products. These green cleaning parties are part of their larger Safe Cleaning Products Initiative, a national effort to reduce exposure to hazardous chemicals in household cleaners.

Go to www.womenandenvironment.org for more information about party locations around the country, fact sheets and state-specific policies.

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