



3rd INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP ADVANCES IN CLEANER PRODUCTION

“CLEANER PRODUCTION INITIATIVES AND CHALLENGES FOR A SUSTAINABLE WORLD”

Advancing chemicals policy in the United States to promote safer chemicals and products.

Ken Zarker
Washington State Department of Ecology USA

In the United States, state governments have been recognized for developing and implementing chemicals policy initiatives designed to promote the transition to safer chemicals, materials, products and processes. These policy efforts were initiated in several leading states to address increasing concerns about toxic chemicals that are found in products, including children's products. This presentation will describe the rise of state comprehensive chemicals policies, efforts to prioritize chemicals of concern, and future actions and tools necessary to spur reform to the federal chemicals management system in the United States under the Toxic Substances Control Act of 1976.

The story about chemicals policy is about how individual states have been taking legislative and policy actions while gaining experience and building the case for comprehensive reforms to address the systemic need for a national solution to address all chemicals in commerce.

As recently as five years ago, “chemicals policy” was just beginning to be recognized as a new area of environmental policy designed to address failures at both the state and federal levels to prevent toxic chemicals exposures to people and the environment. In late 2005, only a few states were addressing individual chemicals of concern such as mercury or toxic flame retardants. Several states were beginning to discuss the need for comprehensive chemicals policy reform as a strategy to move beyond the “chemical by chemical” approach to ban or restrict the use of targeted chemicals.

Those of us working in state pollution prevention and toxics use reduction programs began to expand our vision beyond our traditional work with manufacturers that

CLEANER PRODUCTION INITIATIVES AND CHALLENGES FOR A SUSTAINABLE WORLD”

São Paulo – Brazil – May 18th–20th – 2011



3rd INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP ADVANCES IN CLEANER PRODUCTION

“CLEANER PRODUCTION INITIATIVES AND CHALLENGES FOR A SUSTAINABLE WORLD”

focused on improved process efficiencies, toxic waste reduction and saving businesses money.

The evolution of state chemicals policy initiatives was fostered by state pollution prevention programs. These programs were initially established by the states in response to rising concerns associated with improper hazardous waste management and toxic releases from industrial facilities. As a result, over 23 states passed pollution prevention and waste reduction legislation that either required or encouraged facilities to develop pollution prevention plans to reduce the generation of hazardous wastes and toxics.

In 1990, the U.S. Congress passed the Pollution Prevention Act that established source reduction as a national policy. U.S. EPA further defined pollution prevention and assisted the states with grant funding to provide technical assistance support to industry.