

Healthy Homecoming House Party Kit:

*Coming Home to
Healthy Electronics*





Thank You for Hosting a Healthy Homecoming Party!

Products and materials we use every day are made with toxic chemicals. This can harm our health and the environment. Hosting a *Healthy Homecoming Party* is a great way to learn and share knowledge about how to use safer alternatives to toxic chemicals and prevent pollution. The information in this party kit will help your family and friends learn how look for safer products, and avoid products which may cause harm. They will see that relying on toxic chemicals is not only dangerous, but also unnecessary.

Each kit focuses on a different aspect of coming home to healthy products, but all contain the same underlying message: we can get toxic chemicals out of our lives by making different personal choices, calling on product manufacturers to choose safer materials and supporting stronger government oversight of chemicals. By hosting this event, you are helping to build a community of people who want to create positive change. It is a great opportunity to spread the word and actively work to replace unnecessary toxic chemicals with safer alternatives.

You can host a Healthy Homecoming Party as a small private event with your friends or a larger event in collaboration with local community organizations, daycare centers, small businesses, student groups, or faith-based groups.

No matter how you choose to throw the party, this kit will guide you through the steps and provide materials to get you started. Please read this entire kit and contact us if you have any questions.

Thank you for supporting a healthy environment.

Now let's have some fun!

Table of Contents

Steps to Hosting a Healthy Homecoming Party	2
Frequently Asked Questions	4
Background on Electronics	5
Talking Points	7
Group Activities	9
Taking Action	10
Preparation Materials	
Sample Invite	11
Sample Flyer	11
Media Advisory	12
Party Materials	
Supplies Checklist	13
Sign-in Sheet	14
Guest Survey	15
Informational Handout:	16
Coming Home to Healthy Electronics	



Steps to Hosting a Healthy Homecoming Party



Pick a topic

This kit addresses electronics, but we recommend you choose a specific topic that you and your friends want to know more about – this will help to keep the party focused and ensure you have time to take action. Read the Background and Talking Points thoroughly to prepare yourself for being a resource to your guests.



Pick a date

Get started early to increase your chances of having good attendance. Two to four weeks are enough to plan a smaller event. If you want to have a larger party – 15 or more people – or if you are going to host the party with a community group, you'll be more successful if you begin planning one to two months in advance.

Be sure to keep in mind any possible conflicts with holidays or school schedules. It is a good idea to check with a few guests to confirm they are available before finalizing the date. A save-the-date e-mail or phone call can also be useful. You do not need to have all the details finalized to start sending out basic invitations.



Pick a location

Most parties are held at home – either yours or a friend's. You need an area that is large enough for the group you are inviting, and space to spread out and make or demonstrate any products. Churches, community centers, or campus rooms are great options as well. Depending on the activities you choose for your party, you may prefer a place with a sink or internet access.



Invite people!

After choosing the time and place, send out invitations, preferably two to three weeks in advance. You can make or buy invitations and mail them to people, post a flyer if you want to make it open to the public, send an e-mail, or use an online service like Evite (www.evite.com). These free online services save paper, allow you to design colorful invitations, and track RSVPs.



Optional: Notify local media of the event

If you would like your greater community to hear about the event, or if it is open to the public, you can contact your local newspaper, radio, or TV station to let them know about it. This is a great way to spread the word! A sample media advisory is included in this kit, and feel free to contact Clean and Healthy New York for help.



Buy your party supplies

Check the Supplies Checklist to determine what kind of materials you will need. Consider having food or drink to share and get people talking. You can also ask guests to bring some supplies (containers, baking soda, etc) or a snack to share.



Send out a reminder

Send a phone or e-mail reminder two to three days in advance to remind your invitees of the event (phone calls are most effective). Having a reliable head count will also help you ensure that you have plenty of supplies. This is a good time to review the talking points and check the website for any current events.



Have a party!

Below is a sample agenda for a Healthy Homecoming Party. Reviewing the rest of the materials in this kit will help you decide exactly how you would like the event to flow. You may want to ask someone to take pictures to help document the fun.

- Mix and mingle with snacks, ask new guests sign in and make a name tag.
- Welcome guests, everyone introduces themselves.
- Presentation: Use the Talking Points to teach guests about this issue. (page 7)
- Questions, answers, and discussion: It is OK to say you don't know the answer, and to use Clean and Healthy New York staff as a resource to get back to your guests with the information they want.
- Group Activity: There are several options in each kit. Choose the one that you like best! (page 9)
- Take Action: Let guests know about any current news or updates on relevant opportunities to act (check the Clean and Healthy New York website) as you make a difference with one of these activities, like making a phone call or writing a letter. (page 10)
- Thank you and wrap up: Please ask guests to fill out the Guest Survey so we can continue to improve these materials. Don't forget to collect the surveys and send them to Clean and Healthy New York!



Follow up

Within a week, thank the guests for attending. Feel free to encourage guests to hold their own party, maybe focusing on a different topic! If there were unanswered questions from guests, please send them to us. Also, please send us the details about your event, how it went, recommendations for improvement, and of course, pictures!



Frequently Asked Questions

How much does it cost to host a Healthy Homecoming Party?

You can throw a Healthy Homecoming Party (HH Party) for very little cost. Most hosts make about 20 copies of assorted materials and arrange for light refreshments.

How long should a HH Party last?

HH Parties commonly last between 1 and 2 hours, but this is very flexible.

How many people usually attend a HH Party?

It is up to you! Generally, between 5 and 15 people, but this is also flexible. Even two people talking about the issues and getting involved can help make a difference.

Do I have to get permission to throw a HH Party?

No, but Clean and Healthy New York likes to stay informed about who is using these materials and keep records for our supporters. We would like to know when you held your party, your topic, and the number of guests.

What do I do if a guest asks a question that I cannot answer?

It is very common for guests and hosts to have questions that the scientists have yet to answer. We encourage using the enclosed fact sheets and resource websites during a party to answer any questions that may arise. If you can't find an answer, please email us at info@cleanhealthyny.org!

Can I charge admission to a HH Party?

No, but if you would like to collect donations for Clean and Healthy New York at your party, please see the Healthy Homecoming Fundraising Tips on the Healthy Homecoming website.

Do I need to send anything to CHNY after the Party?

We would love to get feedback and pictures from your party! We would appreciate any means you choose of sending them our way. We would also like to keep in touch with folks who want to know more or get more involved, so please send along any contact information you collect. For example, the guest surveys, contact information, and photos can be mailed to 323 Bonnyview Ln., Schenectady, NY 12306 or emailed to info@cleanhealthyny.org.



Background: Healthy Electronics

Fire-Safe Materials

Fire safety standards require that materials such as electronics, furniture, and building materials to have a certain amount of fire resistance. This gives people more time to get out of the building, which in turn protects firefighters from having to go in and save them.

Product makers often meet these standards in a variety of less-toxic ways: redesigning products, using naturally flame-retardant materials, or adding a less-toxic flame retardant. For instance, laptop makers have moved the battery (a heat source) away from the plastic exterior and added a metal barrier to reduce the likelihood of ignition.

Many TV and computer makers now use plastic cases that are naturally flame-retardant, or use a phosphorous-based flame retardant chemical, which is less toxic than those made from fluorine, chlorine, or bromine (called “halogens”). One common type of flame retardant, polybrominated diphenyl ethers (PBDEs) are similar to polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), which were banned because they are so toxic. We now know, through numerous studies evaluated by state agencies in Illinois, Maine, Washington and elsewhere, that PBDEs can lower sperm count, harm the developing brain and thyroid, and possibly cause cancer. While many manufacturers are switching to alternative flame

retardants, North America used over 40% of decaBDE (a specific PBDE) produced worldwide according to the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency in 2007.

It is not surprising, then, a comparison of studies found that American women have much higher levels of BDEs in their breast milk than European women (again, documented by the Illinois EPA). Over time, PBDEs can get into the air, household dust or on our hands where we breathe them in and ingest them in food and water.

State agencies, including those in Illinois, Maine, Washington, Oregon, and Michigan, have identified cost-effective and equally fire-safe solutions for most applications, and Maine, Vermont, Oregon, and Washington have banned their use in certain applications. The European Union restricted PBDEs in their Restriction of Hazardous Substances Directive (2002/95/EC), so electronics labeled as “RoHS compliant” are only allowed to contain a very limited amount of PBDEs as well as lead, mercury and other toxic chemicals.

In December 2009, the US EPA announced a voluntary agreement with three major decaBDE manufacturers to phase out the chemical. While this was a highly publicized chemical, many other dangerous halogenated flame retardants remain in use.



Electronics Recycling

Electronic devices contain flame retardants and heavy metals like lead, mercury, cadmium, barium, beryllium, and chromium. These persistent toxic chemicals can cause health problems for humans and wildlife if improperly recycled, thrown into landfills, or burned in incinerators. Although e-waste represents less than 2 percent of municipal waste nationwide, it makes up as much as 40% of the lead found in landfills, according to US EPA. Electronic devices also contain synthetic chemicals that can contribute to health problems when used and disposed of. PVC, or vinyl plastic, and PBDEs release dioxins and furans (highly toxic chemicals) when burned.

At least 2.25 million tons of electronics were disposed of in the US in 2007, and

of those, only 18% were recycled, and 82% went into landfills or incinerators, according to the US EPA. Recycling can reduce waste, but not all recycling is equal. Much of the electronic waste is sent to poor countries where “recyclers” are not protected: children often burn PVC coated wires to recover copper, and lead and other heavy metals are melted in family cooking pots. This exposes them to toxic chemicals.

The best way to ensure that our electronic devices are designed from the start to be less toxic as well as to be easily and fully recyclable is to make manufacturers responsible for the full life of their products. This approach, called "Extended Producer Responsibility" can be used for lots of different products and packaging.

References and Resources

Chemical Information and Health Impacts:

- ATSDR ToxFAQs for PBDEs: www.atsdr.cdc.gov/tfacts68-pbde.html
- From Environmental Health News:
 - Reproductive Problems: www.environmentalhealthnews.org/ehs/newscience/prenatal-pbbs-higher-risk-of-male-genital-problems/
 - Changes in male hormone levels: www.environmentalhealthnews.org/ehs/newscience/PBDEs-may-alter-hormone-levels-in-men/

Policies:

- NYS Green Purchasing: www.ogs.state.ny.us/ExecutiveOrder4.html
- Environmental Working Group list of regulations: www.ewg.org/node/8456

Alternatives:

- Greening Consumer Electronics: www.cleanproduction.org/Electronics.GreeningConsumer.php
- Greenpeace Guide to Greener Electronics: www.greenpeace.org/raw/content/usa/press-center/reports4/copy-of-guide-to-greener-elect.pdf

E-waste:

- Electronics Takeback Coalition. The Problem with Electronics: Toxic Materials in Electronic Products www.electronicstakeback.com/problem/toxics_problem.htm
- Statistics on the Management of Used and End-of-Life Electronics: <http://www.epa.gov/epawaste/conserve/materials/ecycling/manage.htm>



Talking Points

The story:

- Some electronics makers treat products with toxic chemicals to make them flame resistant.
- Electronics contain toxic metals such as lead, cadmium and mercury.
- These chemicals can poison house dust, air and drinking water, and harm our health.
- “Green” procurement policies for NY State, New York City and other municipalities have helped to reduce pollution and change the marketplace.
- However, in the absence of state or federal laws on these chemicals in products, we are left without a safety net to keep our homes and families safe.

What to watch out for:

Flame Retardants

- PBDEs (poly brominated diphenyl ethers) and other flame retardants used in furniture and electronics build up in our homes, bodies, and breast milk.
- Over time, these chemicals can get into the air, household dust or on our hands where we breathe them in and ingest them in food and water.
- PBDEs are similar to PCBs, which were banned because they are so toxic.
- PBDE exposure can cause thyroid harm and lifelong damage to the developing brain.
- According to the EPA, decaBDE (one PBDE) probably causes cancer.
- New York, several other states, and the European Union have banned some PBDEs, but other toxic flame retardants are still being used.

Electronics recycling

- Electronics now make up the fastest growing municipal waste source.
- Electronics contain lead, mercury, flame retardants and other chemicals that are harmful to people and the environment.
- 2.25 million tons of electronics were thrown out in 2007. Only 18% of that waste was recycled.
- E-waste currently represents less than 2% of the municipal waste stream nationwide, but may make up as much as 40% of the lead found in landfills.



- Often times “recycled” e-waste is sent to poor countries where “recyclers” are not protected. Children use bare hands and family cooking pots to touch heavy metals. This exposes them to toxic chemicals. Waste is also washed into surface waters.

What you can do:

Flame retardants

- Choose products made without chemical flame retardants or with less toxic ones. Major companies are no longer using halogenated flame retardants and use alternative, less-toxic flame retardants or materials that do not burn easily. (see the Informational Handout.)
- Wash your hands before you eat to remove dust.

Before you buy electronics, call or email the company and ask them how they achieve fire safety standards. This also helps companies know their customers care about chemical safety and can influence their product designs.

E-waste

- Return your e-waste to manufacturers with take-back or recycling programs. (see the Informational Handout)
- When buying a new product, choose a company that has a take-back program.
- Use municipal recycling programs if they exist. Call the service provider and ask how and where the products are dismantled.



Group Activities

As your guests arrive, start by talking about the basics of the issue using your background knowledge and the talking points. Then, these group activities are a great way of encouraging your guests to get involved and understand how their actions can make a difference. Choose one or more:

- Brainstorm a list of companies who use fewer toxic chemicals (use the Handout). Which products do you own or might you buy because of this?
- Are there stores in your community that sell natural or safer products? If so, have everyone brainstorm a list and consider ways you can show your support for these stores. Would these stores appreciate hearing about your Healthy Homecoming Party, consider hosting future parties, or be a good source of information about available safer products?
- Count the number of electronic devices you use on a daily basis. Which devices might contain toxic chemicals that could harm your health and the environment?
- Brainstorm how to recycle your old electronic devices rather than put them into a landfill. What recycling options are available in your community? Do your electronics makers take back your old products when you buy a new one?
- Watch Greenpeace's movie *Where Does E-Waste End Up?* to learn about these issues. (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OJZey9GJQP0>) Talk about the stories in the movie.



Taking Action

An important part of any educational party is that your guests stay involved and share their new knowledge. Here are some ways your guests can take action to further spread the word and make a difference.

- Write a letter to the editor voicing your concerns about this topic. We have included an outline and an example letter. Be sure to tell your personal story in your letters.
- Write or call the manufacturers of electronics or furniture products that you own. Ask them to phase out brominated flame retardants (if still using) and other toxic chemicals in any electronics they make. Look for a mailing address or an 800 number on the product, website, or packaging.

Letter to the Editor

1. Look for details on how to submit your letter in the opinions section of your paper
2. Keep your letter to 250 words or less
3. Never be rude or inappropriate (not that you would be!)
4. Always include your name, address, and phone or e-mail for verification

Outline:

- If possible, start your letter by mentioning a related health or environmental issue recently covered in the paper
- Mention the issue you are concerned about
- State what you are asking for (ex: manufacturers to make safer products, etc)
- Tell why this issue matters to you
- Close your letter with a point you'd like readers to remember





Preparation Materials

Sample Invite

To invite your friends, family, coworkers, and neighbors to your Healthy Homecoming Party, you may want to try several different approaches, such as e-mail, paper-mail, a telephone call, or a chance encounter in the grocery store. If you are searching for the text of a written invitation, here is an example.

Dear friend,

I know that you, like me, are concerned about toxic chemicals in our everyday lives and want to learn more about how to protect our bodies and our families.

I recently learned that (insert topic here) can contain chemicals with known links to serious health concerns such as cancer and birth defects. They should not be in products we use every day! Laws concerning these issues are outdated and ineffective, so we're often left in the dark about how best to protect our families.

I have decided to hold an event so we can all learn more! Please join me for a Healthy Homecoming Party to learn how to cut through the confusion about which products to avoid or use, which chemicals are of concern, and what we can do! Ultimately, relying on toxic chemicals is not only dangerous, but also unnecessary.

We will have several activities planned like (insert activity here). You will also be able to find out how get involved. There is absolutely nothing for sale.

Please bring a desire to learn! I hope you can make it.

Where: (location address and parking details)
When: (date and time)
What: Healthy Homecoming Party about (insert topic here)
Why: To make better decisions for our family and the planet
Please RSVP to: (provide your contact information here)
(Are children welcome at your event? If so, please let guests know)



Sample Party Flyer

Hanging flyers on bulletin boards can be an effective way to advertise and connect with neighbors. Here is an example flyer. A digital, editable version of this flyer is available on the Healthy Homecoming Party website.



Sample Media Advisory

Local news sources often like to report on how their readers are working towards making a stronger community. Stories that feature Healthy Homecoming Parties greatly enhance the effect of the event. Feel free to distribute a media advisory to your local newspaper, television station, or radio station to increase the reach of your efforts. Here is the basic format for a media advisory to get you started.

MEDIA ADVISORY

Title (Ex: Join Us to Learn about Chemicals in Products)

Date of event

WHAT: A brief description of the event (topic covered, purpose, etc)

WHEN: Day of week, full date, time of day

WHERE: Name of building (street address, room number)

CONTACT: Local: List name, phone number, and e-mail address (if appropriate). State-level: Clean & Healthy NY, www.cleanhealthyny.org

DETAILS: (OPTIONAL) Can include information about: who the event is targeted toward, the event goal, parking information, or anything else that the audience needs to know.





Party Materials

As you prepare for your party, we have provided you with a checklist of things to gather, print, or set up to ensure your party runs smoothly. Be sure to print enough copies of the items in *italics* before your party begins.

Supplies Checklist

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Guest sign in sheet</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> Paper and pencils for guests |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Fact sheets for guests</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> Food and/or drink |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Guest Surveys</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> Camera to take pictures |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Name tags | <input type="checkbox"/> Video player, if using |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sample product display tables | <input type="checkbox"/> Addresses or phone numbers to write or call |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Computer with internet, if using | |

Planning notes:



Healthy Homecoming Sign In Sheet

Clean and Healthy New York works to advance broad policy and market changes to protect people and communities from toxic chemicals. *Your support will help us:*

- Advance policy and market campaigns that remove dangerous, unnecessary chemicals from commerce.
- Promote healthy products, economic approaches, and solutions.
- Educate and empower individuals to engage in campaigns for environmental health and justice.

Please add your voice to the call for environmental health by checking the box below. We will update you via email. Clean and Healthy New York does not share lists.

<i>Name</i>	<i>Street Address, City, State, Zip Code</i>	<i>Phone Number (with area code)</i>	<i>E-mail Address</i>	<i>Contact Me</i>
				<input type="checkbox"/>
				<input type="checkbox"/>
				<input type="checkbox"/>
				<input type="checkbox"/>
				<input type="checkbox"/>
				<input type="checkbox"/>
				<input type="checkbox"/>
				<input type="checkbox"/>
				<input type="checkbox"/>
				<input type="checkbox"/>
				<input type="checkbox"/>



Healthy Homecoming Guest Survey

Name (if willing): _____

Presenter: _____ Host (if different): _____

Date: _____ Location: _____

First, please give us some quick feedback on the presentation.

<i>I learned</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> a lot	<input type="checkbox"/> some	<input type="checkbox"/> not much	<i>from this presentation</i>
<i>I had</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> a lot of	<input type="checkbox"/> some	<input type="checkbox"/> not much	<i>fun today</i>
<i>The presentation gave</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> too much	<input type="checkbox"/> just right	<input type="checkbox"/> not enough	<i>information</i>
<i>The handout had</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> too much	<input type="checkbox"/> just right	<input type="checkbox"/> not enough	<i>information</i>
<i>Based on what I learned today, I plan to make</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> a lot of	<input type="checkbox"/> some	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<i>different purchasing decisions</i>

Please list three changes you plan to make in your personal purchasing decisions:

Please suggest two ways we could improve the presentation:

Based on the presentation and activities, I would (check all that apply):

<input type="checkbox"/> Host a similar event	<input type="checkbox"/> Organize in-district meeting with officials
<input type="checkbox"/> Join an e-mail list for more information	<input type="checkbox"/> Collect postcards
<input type="checkbox"/> Join an action alert list	<input type="checkbox"/> Work on local issues
<input type="checkbox"/> Call my elected officials	<input type="checkbox"/> Write a letter to the editor
<input type="checkbox"/> Come to Albany to meet with policymakers	<input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____

Other thoughts?



Coming Home to Healthy Electronics

The Problem

Electronics makers treat their products with chemicals to make them flame resistant. Electronics commonly contain other toxic metals such as lead and mercury. These chemicals can poison our air and drinking water, and make us sick. Improper recycling and disposal exposes humans, water, and wildlife to lead, mercury, and toxic flame retardants.



“Green” procurement policies for NY State and other municipalities have helped to reduce pollution and increase awareness of this health and safety issue. However, in the absence of state or federal regulations on these chemicals in products, we are left without a safety net to keep our homes and families safe.

What to Watch Out For:

Brominated and Chlorinated Flame Retardants: The highest-profile of these are PBDEs (poly brominated diphenyl ethers), flame retardants used in furniture and electronics that are building up in our homes, bodies, and breast milk. Over time, PBDEs can get into the air, household dust or on our hands where we breathe them in and ingest them in food and water.

PBDEs are chemically similar to PCBs, which are banned because of their toxic impact on health and the environment. PBDE exposure causes thyroid harm and lifelong damage to the developing brain. According to the EPA, decaBDE (one kind of PBDE) probably causes cancer. As a result, New York, several other states, and the European Union have banned some PBDEs, but decaBDE is still used in some household products.



Look for them in: computer casings, televisions and other electronics with plastic casings

E-waste: Electronics are now the fastest growing type of trash. They contain lead, mercury, flame retardants and other chemicals, so proper disposal of electronic waste is important. Children in developing countries and prison laborers are often tasked with dismantling electronics to recover valuable components. Both can be exposed to heavy metals and other health risks while doing so.

What Can I Do?

Toxic Flame Retardants:

- Choose products made without them. Major companies are no longer using decaBDE and use alternative, less-toxic flame retardants or materials that don't burn easily
- Dust regularly to avoid buildup of PBDEs and other chemicals.
- Choose inherently flame resistant materials like leather, wool, or metal.
- Wash your hands before eating.
- Before you buy products, call or email the company and ask them how they achieve fire safety standards.

E-waste:

- Return your e-waste to manufacturers with producer take-back or recycling programs, including Dell, HP, Apple, Asus (laptops only), Toshiba (laptops only), Gateway, Lenovo, Viewsonic, and Sony.
- Use municipal recycling programs. Call the service provided and ask how and where the products are recycled.
- Host your own Healthy Homecoming party! Find out how at www.cleanhealthyny.org/hhparty.html

Companies Making Products Without Chlorine and/or Bromine

Apple
Sony Ericsson
DSM Engineering Plastics
Nan Ya
Indium Corporation
Seagate Technology
Silicon Storage Technology (SST)

Sources: a) Greening Consumer Electronics: Moving Away from Bromine and Chlorine, Clean Production Action, ChemSec, September 2009.

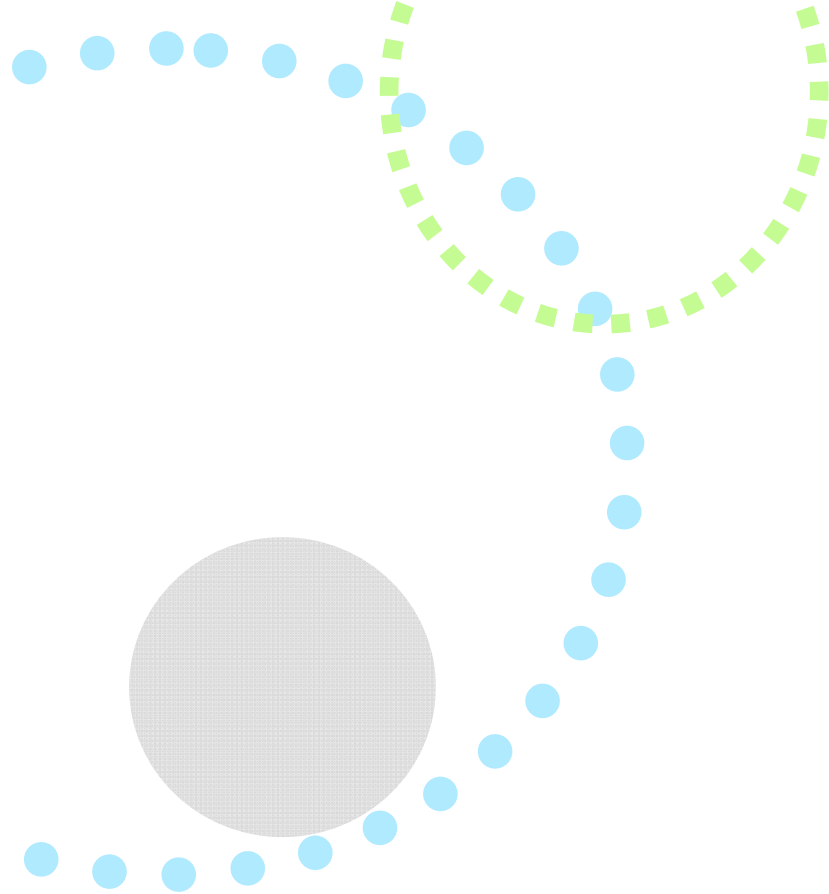
For More Information:

- CDC ToxFAQs for PBDEs: www.atsdr.cdc.gov/tfacts68-pbde.html
- Environmental Working Group: www.ewg.org
- NYS Green Procurement: www.ogs.state.ny.us/ExecutiveOrder4.html
- Clean Production Action: www.cleanproduction.org
- Electronics Takeback Coalition: www.electronicstakeback.com/
- Greenpeace Guide to Greener Electronics: www.greenpeace.org/raw/content/usa/press-center/reports4/copy-of-guide-to-greener-elect.pdf



Supported by a grant from New York State Pollution Prevention Institute funded through the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation.

Created by Clean & Healthy New York, 62 Grand St, Albany, NY 12207. 518-708-3922. www.cleanhealthyny.org



Supported by a grant from New York State Pollution Prevention Institute funded through the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation

Created by Clean & Healthy New York, 62 Grand St, Albany, NY 12207. 518-708-3922. www.cleanhealthyny.org

**CLEAN &
HEALTHY
NEW YORK**

