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# REACH taking a close-up look at bulk chemicals

## Bisphenol A and refrigerant in mobile air-conditioning systems to be retested

**The bulk chemical Bisphenol A with hormone-like properties is to be subjected to a new assessment, as according to the provisions in the European Chemical Agency's (ECHA) action plan. The fluorinated refrigerant R1234yf used in mobile air-conditioning systems in passenger cars will be re-assessed. The EU has established its use in newly registered vehicles since 2011. The rubber additive PAN is also scheduled for a review. All three chemicals are thought to have either direct or indirect adverse impact on the environment. UBA President Jochen Flasbarth says, "The Federal Environment Agency had suggested subjecting these three substances to testing at European level. If test results prove their harmfulness, their use must be newly regulated."**

The Federal Environment Agency (UBA) is having the controversial chemical Bisphenol A (4,4'-Isopropylidenediphenol) re-evaluated in 2012 as part of the REACH European Chemicals Regulation. It is a chemical which is present in many everyday products such as fax paper, blank CDs, or in polycarbonate form, e.g. in the housing for electronic devices. Jochen Flasbarth said, "The REACH procedure will assess the potential harmfulness of Bisphenol A on the endocrine system and other environmental organisms and humans. Its emissions to the environment will also be more closely examined. Test results can then re-assess the risk it poses to the environment."

The environmental impact of the fluorinated refrigerant R-1234yf (tetrafluoropropene or polyhaloalkene) will also be re-assessed. They are used mainly in mobile air-conditioning systems in passenger cars. Large volume of this chemical are set to be used in the next few years. The German automotive industry decided on its use starting 2011 in the air-conditioning systems of new type vehicles marketed in the EU. Due to the expected high volume of its use the Federal Ministry for Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMU) has commissioned the authorities responsible for REACH implementation to assess the environmental and health risks of this chemical, as according to the ECHA action plan. PAN (N-1-Naphthylaniline), a persistent chemical, is used in rubber products and lubricants. UBA will be following up on the concern that PAN has environmentally harmful properties. It is presumed to be very persistent in the environment and may accumulate and have toxic effect in organisms. Evidence of these three

properties might result in a proposal to require an authorization procedure or limitations on its use.

Evidence of increased risk to mankind and the environment would require new regulation of the chemicals. The chemical may thereafter be authorized for certain applications or otherwise necessitate a general authorization procedure. Its application may also be restricted to certain industries. In the absence of complete documentation or confirmation of suspected risk, producers and importers are required by law to submit additional information until a final decision has been taken. Germany has committed to re-assessment of five chemicals in 2012, which must be completed by February 2013. The environmental assessment is carried out by UBA, and aspects of risk to humans is assessed by the Federal Institute of Risk Assessment (BfR) and the Federal Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (BAUA). The group of chemicals are assessed as part of the ECHA action plan. There are a total of 36 chemicals in Europe which will be assessed in 2012.

### **More information and links:**

#### REACH procedure

The REACH Regulation transfers the responsibility of chemical risk assessment upon producers and importers. They are required to submit comprehensive registration documentation, of which ECHA reviews 5% every year. The EU Member States and the ECHA may elect to assess additional chemicals if there is any indication of risk to human health or the environment. The joint action plan always runs for three years and focuses on the chemicals that ECHA and member states wish to test. The list of chemicals is updated annually.

#### ECHA Action Plan:

<http://echa.europa.eu/web/guest/information-on-chemicals/evaluation/community-rolling-action-plan/corap-list-of-substances>

#### UBA background paper on Bisphenol A is here:

<http://www.umweltbundesamt.de/uba-info-medien-e/3782.html>

#### Our background paper on refrigerant in mobile air-conditioning systems in passenger cars is here:

<http://www.umweltbundesamt.de/uba-info-medien-e/4055.html>

[Presseinformation der Bundesanstalt für Arbeitsschutz und Arbeitsmedizin](#)

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