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California Bill Would Address Flame Retardants in Insulation

By Erin Weaver

A bill introduced in the California Legislature would express the State's intent to reduce chemical flame retardants in building insulation, arguing that they pose a health hazard and are unnecessary in modern construction.

State Assembly Member Nancy Skinner introduced Bill AB 127 in January, saying that California recognizes the toxicity of flame retardants when applied to furniture, but not in the [plastic foam insulation](#) sprayed into the walls of homes and businesses. AB 127 notes that 1960s building codes establishing fire safety standards did not specify that those standards be met by the addition of chemicals, but in practice they led to the use of flame retardants such as HBCD and TCPP, which are associated with reproductive and developmental harm and potential carcinogenicity.

After foam insulation was implicated in serious fires in the following decade, in 1976 the State required a thermal barrier such as gypsum wallboard. The bill states that thermal barriers "have been deemed to be sufficient for fire safety;" if passed, AB 127 would announce the Legislature's intent to enact further legislation reducing "unnecessary chemicals from building insulation, while preserving building fire safety and encouraging healthy building practices."

March 1, 2013

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