



## Center for Health, Environment & Justice

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### **Target Faces Mounting Pressure to Phase Out Toxic Products & Packaging On Day of Annual Shareholder Meeting**

**Events at Over 200 Target Stores Nationwide Plus Ad in *USA Today***

#### **New Report Shows Target Lags Behind Other Major Retailers in Refusing to Replace PVC Packaging, Toys and Shower Curtains With Safe Alternatives**

(May 24, 2007) – While Target shareholders attended the company’s annual meeting in Cleveland, Ohio today, environmental groups and concerned customers around the country urged their local Target stores to phase out PVC products and packaging via protests, press conferences and letters that were delivered to store managers. PVC, commonly known as vinyl, is composed of poisonous chemicals that off-gas into the air we breathe, causing major health risks including cancer and birth defects. Yet it is used to make many children’s toys, teething rings, shower curtains, lunchboxes, shampoo bottles and home building materials. Today Target’s CEO was delivered a petition with over 10,000 signatures demanding that the company phase out products made with or packaged in PVC. In addition, an ad ran in Cleveland’s edition of *USA Today* urging Target to phase out PVC.

Also today a new report was released entitled: “*Way Off Target: A Critical Assessment of Target’s PVC Products & Packaging*” which details how Target lags behind other major retailers who are already committed to replacing PVC (polyvinyl chloride), with safe alternatives. New testing shows that Target sells some children’s PVC products such as boots and shoes that contain lead. Just this month Wal-Mart and Apple announced plans to phase out PVC in baby bibs, children’s products and computers. Other companies are following suit including Nike, Microsoft, Ikea, H&M and Johnson & Johnson. In the meantime over 60 environmental groups and 40,000 customers have signed petitions, sent letters, faxes and made telephone calls to Target urging them to phase out PVC, yet they still refuse.

Hasbro also held their annual shareholder meeting today, where shareholders voted on a resolution that highlights concerns about Hasbro toys manufactured from and packaged in PVC. Target is Hasbro’s second largest customer, right after Wal-Mart who earlier this month announced their support for the elimination of PVC in children’s products. In July, Bed, Bath, and Beyond will hold their shareholder meeting where a PVC resolution is also up for vote.

“Target claims to be an environmentally-friendly retailer, and yet their shelves are filled with products made from PVC, the poison plastic,” said Lois Gibbs, Executive Director of the Center for Health, Environment & Justice. “We won’t stop until Target agrees to phase out PVC and switches to healthier alternatives as other companies have already done.”

Today’s *Way Off Target* report focuses on three key areas in which Target sells many products made of PVC: children’s products and toys, shower curtains and packaging. Target customers may be exposed to highly toxic chemicals from using these products in their homes. Following is a summary of the report’s findings:

**Toxic Toys** – Infants and children chewing on PVC toys and baby products may be exposed to phthalates. These dangerous chemicals are linked to premature birth delivery, early puberty in girls, impaired sperm quality and sperm damage in men, genital defects and reduced testosterone production in boys. Target has no publicly stated commitment to phase out PVC baby/children’s products and toys. In contrast Wal-Mart announced just this month that they will stop selling PVC baby bibs and is working toward an industry standard to eliminate PVC from all products intended for use by children. Wal-Mart has also phased out PVC lunchboxes. Ikea phased out all PVC toys over 10 years ago.

**Toxic Shower Curtains** – In 2002 researchers at the US EPA reported a PVC shower curtain “can cause elevated indoor air toxic concentrations...for more than a month.” Target customers have repeatedly complained on Target’s website about strong chemical odors being released from the shower curtains they sell. While Target only offers five shower curtains made out of EVA, a safer PVC-free plastic, they sell at least ten times as many curtains made out of PVC. This is unfortunate considering EVA shower curtains perform well and are generally cost competitive with PVC shower curtains. Ikea stopped selling PVC products including vinyl shower curtains over ten years ago.

**Toxic Packaging** – More than two billion pounds per year of short-lived PVC products, such as packaging, are discarded with U.S. household trash. In fact, nondurable products, such as packaging, account for more than 70% of the PVC disposed of in U.S. municipal waste. PVC packaging can contaminate and ruin other recyclable plastics. While Target is a member of the Sustainable Packaging Coalition, the company has no publicly stated policy commitment to phase out PVC packaging. In 2005, Wal-Mart committed to eliminating all private label PVC packaging in two years. PVC packaging has been banned in several countries including Canada, Czech Republic, Spain and South Korea. There is proposed legislation in California to ban PVC packaging, where Target has 211 stores.

**Toxic Life Cycle** – PVC isn’t only dangerous when the products are in use. The manufacturing and disposal of PVC is also extremely harmful, releasing highly hazardous chemicals including dioxins and furans, vinyl chloride, ethylene dichloride, lead, phthalates and mercury into the environment. PVC manufacturing plants are often located in low-income communities and communities of color, making the production of PVC a major environmental justice concern for neighboring residents. PVC manufacturing facilities have exposed workers and fence-line neighbors to toxic carcinogens and caused major air pollution, chemical spills and contaminated drinking water supplies.

“As Target can see by today’s events, they will be held accountable for knowingly selling products that are harmful to our health and environment,” said Gibbs. “We hope they will do the right thing and shift to products and packaging that are safer for our families and future.”

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**Attention reporters: Copies of the new "Way Off Target" report, USA Today ad, petition to Target, high resolution photos, and other materials are available for download at [http://www.besafenet.com/pvc/may\\_24\\_resource\\_page.htm](http://www.besafenet.com/pvc/may_24_resource_page.htm)**