



# Learning and Developmental Disabilities Initiative

[of the Collaborative on Health and the Environment](#)



**Biweekly Bulletin December 16, 2009**

This bulletin lists upcoming events plus recent announcements, news and journal articles, calls for proposals and other items related to learning and developmental disabilities and environmental health. They are archived and searchable on LDDI's website:

[www.healthandenvironment.org/working\\_groups/learning/r/bulletins](http://www.healthandenvironment.org/working_groups/learning/r/bulletins) (Note the new URL).

## LDDI Highlights

### LDDI Website: New URL

LDDI's website is now fully transferred to its new location and is also accessible through a new URL that's more meaningful and easier to remember:

[www.disabilityandenvironment.org](http://www.disabilityandenvironment.org). Please update the links on your websites to use this new URL.

### LDDI Biomonitoring Project Update

The LDDI biomonitoring project is working with the larger environmental health community and the Raben Group, a communications firm in Washington, DC, on a strategic plan for media and educational opportunities gained from this project. A report release is planned for the second week in February and will coincide with the LDA meeting in Baltimore, Maryland, in which participants from the biomonitoring project will participate in a symposium to share their experiences in the project.

Additional speakers at the February meeting include policymakers such as Maryland Assemblyman James Hubbard, who introduced environmental-health legislation in Maryland on BPA and other chemicals and heads a group of state legislators on TSCA reform. For more information on the biomonitoring project, contact Laura Abulafia at [laura@healthandenvironment.org](mailto:laura@healthandenvironment.org), and for more information on the LDA symposium please contact Maureen Swanson at [mswanson@ldaamerica.org](mailto:mswanson@ldaamerica.org).

### LDDI Leadership Meets in Seattle

The LDDI leadership group consisting of the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD), Autism Society of America (ASA), the Learning Disabilities Association of America (LDA) and the National Association for the Dually Diagnosed (NADD) met in Seattle for a one-day strategic planning meeting on December 1st to develop goals for 2010.

## Announcements

A daily news feed with articles and announcements is available on CHE's website: <http://www.healthandenvironment.org/news/announce>.

### [National Report on Human Exposure to Environmental Chemicals.](#)

The blood and urine samples were collected from participants in CDC's National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES), which is an ongoing survey that samples the U.S. population every two years.

[See related articles: [New CDC survey tracks mercury levels in Americans](#) and [New frontiers -- and limitations -- in testing people's bodies for chemicals](#)]

### **Loma Linda University inaugurates new Health Geoinformatics Lab.**

The Health Geoinformatics Laboratory center will provide undergraduate and graduate students with hands-on experience in applying modern information system technologies that combine maps and satellite imagery with data about the geographic locations of diseases, health care resources, and sociodemographic characteristics of communities.

### **Health Department launches a web portal to track the city's environmental health conditions.**

New York City Health Department's new Environmental Public Health Tracking Portal provides continually updated information on everything from air quality and housing quality to pest levels and pesticide use.

### **Call for comments: EPA to strengthen oversight of pesticide's impact on children and farmworkers.**

EPA's proposal would include a more thorough assessment of risks to workers, including farmworkers and farm children, as well as risks posed by pesticides that are not used on food. The agency is asking the public to comment on the new approach and how best to implement the improvements.

### **Call for comments: Primary national ambient air quality standard for sulfur dioxide.**

EPA proposes to establish a new 1-hour SO<sub>2</sub> standard within the range of 50 - 100 parts per billion (ppb), based on the 3-year average of the annual 99th percentile (or 4th highest) of 1-hour daily maximum concentrations.

### **New online forum increases public's access to EPA.**

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has launched an online discussion forum designed to enhance communication between EPA and the public on contaminated sites, waste management, and recycling issues.

### **Sick Schools 2009.**

"Sick Schools 2009 - America's Continuing Environmental Health Crisis for Children" offers peer-reviewed studies and compelling evidence of how polluted air inside and outside schools escalates health care costs, increases absenteeism, and reduces test scores.

[See a related article: [EPA detects brain-damaging toxic near school](#)]

### **Summer Program in Environmental Health (SUPEH).**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Summer Program in Environmental Health (SUPEH) is a 10-week internship for students majoring in environmental health.

### **EPA announces proposal to withdraw the Emission Comparable Fuels Rule.**

The ECF rule governs fuel that would otherwise be regulated as hazardous waste, but that generates emissions that are comparable to fuel oil.

### **Job opening: Bethesda, Maryland.**

The Health and Environmental Funders Network (HEFN) is currently seeking a part-time administrative assistant to support its small office in a 16-hour-per-week hourly wage position.

## **Upcoming Events**

**Online Calendar.** These and more upcoming events are listed in a searchable calendar: <http://www.healthandenvironment.org/cgi-bin/searchevents.cgi>

### **1) CHE Science Cafe Call: A Conversation with Elizabeth Grossman, Author of *Chasing Molecules***

Tuesday January 19, 2010

11:00 a.m. Pacific / 2:00 p.m. Eastern time

Sponsor: Collaborative on Health and the Environment

Known for her book *High Tech Trash*, an exposé of the electronic waste industry, Elizabeth Grossman's new book, *Chasing Molecules: Poisonous Products, Human Health, and the Promise of Green Chemistry*, reveals the dangers and the extent of the chemicals that are found in everyday products such as BPA, perfluorinated compounds, brominated flame retardants and phthalates, and offers up hope for a future without them. With *Chasing Molecules*, Grossman reveals that we can do better; that we can make materials that we have come to rely on with chemicals that have been tested to be safe and are in fact "benign by design." In a radical departure from how synthetic chemistry has been practiced, Grossman suggests that green chemistry should be used to create new materials for use in everything from sippy cups to carpets.

Price: free

[Visit the website](#)

Contact: CHE, [info@healthandenvironment.org](mailto:info@healthandenvironment.org)

## News and Journal Articles

### [Sacramento protest targets farm chemical.](#)

*Tuesday, December 15, 2009*

The fight over a potent farm chemical [methyl iodide] is heating up as state regulators near a decision on approving its use in California. Fresno Bee, California.

### [UN left hundreds of Kosovo kids to die of lead poisoning.](#)

*Tuesday, December 15, 2009*

The youngsters are being poisoned by dust blowing into a stinking refugee camp from a mountain of toxic lead waste towering above them. London Sun, United Kingdom.

[See another story related to lead poisoning: [Study finds lead in 100% house paint in Nigeria](#)]

### [Reclaiming health: Residents battle to overcome health inequities.](#)

*Sunday, December 13, 2009*

One-fifth of Sobrante Park's 2,800 residents live in poverty. It has far higher rates of asthma hospitalizations and diabetes, and deaths from cancer and heart disease, than more affluent East Bay neighborhoods. Contra Costa Times, California.

[See related articles: [Life may be shorter in poorer neighborhoods](#) and [In East Bay, where pollution goes, health problems follow](#)]

### [Household toxins.](#)

*Sunday, December 13, 2009*

As it has long been suspected, toxins and carcinogenic chemicals lurk around the house and, particularly, in the kitchen where food for the family is stored and prepared. Manila Bulletin, Philippines.

[See a related article: [Choose non-toxic decor for a non-polluting apartment](#)]

### [Oregon drops the ball on mercury.](#)

*Sunday, December 13, 2009*

Nearly every day, an eastern Oregon cement factory vents an invisible and toxic cloud of mercury into the skies above Durkee. Only one other factory in the country emits more mercury of the type most harmful to people. Portland Oregonian, Oregon.

### [It's best to avoid BPA, federal official says.](#)

*Saturday, December 12, 2009*

The head of the primary federal agency studying the safety of bisphenol A said Friday that people should avoid ingesting the chemical - especially pregnant women, infants and children. Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, Wisconsin.

[See related articles: [Getting to the bottom of plastic bottle risks](#) and [Chemical BPA may harm developing fetus, Quebec study suggests](#)]

### [Is dirty electricity making you sick?](#)

*Friday, December 11, 2009*

In addition to the stunning new investigations into dirty electricity (which we'll return to), several developments have highlighted the growing hazards of EMF pollution -- and the crucial need to address them. Prevention.

[See a related article: [Pollutants cluster under power lines](#)]

#### **[EPA: No urgent concern over artificial field surfaces.](#)**

*Friday, December 11, 2009*

The U.S. EPA said yesterday that there was no cause for immediate concern from lead and other toxins in artificial-turf fields and playground surfaces made from recycled tires. It cautioned, however, that the 123-page study was too small to rule out potential health threats. Philadelphia Inquirer, Pennsylvania.

#### **[Pollution hotspots: Places we don't want to be.](#)**

*Tuesday, December 08, 2009*

As world leaders prepare to head to Copenhagen for talks aimed at reaching a deal to slow the pace of climate change, people around the world are experiencing environmental destruction in myriad ways, some subtle, others devastating. Reuters.

[See a related article: [Oilsands pollution exceeds official estimates: study](#)]

#### **[EPA unveils new policies on water at schools.](#)**

*Tuesday, December 08, 2009*

The Environmental Protection Agency unveiled a new national strategy to enforce safe drinking water laws in small, rural communities on Tuesday and pledged to redouble efforts to protect children from toxic water in schools. Houston Chronicle, Texas.

[See related articles: [EPA plan for improving schools' drinking water gets chilly reception at Senate hearing](#), [Millions in U.S. drinking dirty water, records show](#), [Rules to ensure safer water not on tap yet](#), [L.A. water ranks 83rd in nation](#) and [Gender-bending chemicals in Minnesota waters](#)]

#### **[The unusual suspects.](#)**

*Tuesday, December 08, 2009*

As food production and preparation moves farther afield, tainted items become hard to avoid. Washington Post.

#### **[White House urged to help states with nuclear plants stockpile thyroid drug.](#)**

*Monday, December 07, 2009*

Citing lessons from Hurricane Katrina, advocates are seeking to reverse a Bush-era policy and increase advance distribution of potassium iodide to protect people near nuclear power plants in the event of an accident or an attack. New York Times.

#### **[Accidental release of toxic chemicals, polluted water by local plants cited in report.](#)**

*Monday, December 07, 2009*

Frequent accidents at 10 of the state's biggest refineries resulted in the release of millions of pounds of toxic chemicals into the air and millions of gallons of polluted water between 2005 and 2008, a new report finds. New Orleans Times-Picayune, Louisiana.

#### **[New bleach alternative safe for kids.](#)**

*Monday, December 07, 2009*

The product's active ingredient -- trichloromelamine -- was invented in the 1940s by the military as a mess kit and fruit and vegetable treatment for soldiers. It is a different form of chlorine than the chlorine in bleach and kills contaminants quickly. Des Moines Register, Iowa.

#### **[U of I team fears PCBs may remain cause for concern.](#)**

*Sunday, December 06, 2009*

PCBs, the toxic chemicals banned in the 1970s, are back. Actually, they never went away. Now, researchers have reason to believe that PCBs are continuing to accumulate in Lake Michigan, and probably elsewhere. They are trying to figure out how big of a problem that is and what can be done. Des Moines Register, Iowa.

[See a related article: [St. Clair Shores residents battle PCB contamination](#)]

### **[A whole new look at dietary benefits of fish.](#)**

*Sunday, December 06, 2009*

New research indicates levels of selenium, more so than mercury, are key to whether seafood may be beneficial or harmful. But some scientists have questioned the findings and no changes to state and federal health advisories are planned. Fort Myers News-Press, Florida.

*[See related articles: [Selenium, omega-3s may stave off colorectal cancer](#) and [Fishing for facts](#)]*

### **[Study shows San Antonio's power plants have little effect on public health.](#)**

*Saturday, December 05, 2009*

An independent study conducted by the University of Texas School of Public Health San Antonio showed that CPS Energy's natural gas-fired and coal-fired power plant have minimal impact on the health of Bexar County residents. San Antonio Business Journal, Texas.

*[See a related article: [Utah Supreme Court rules against coal power plant](#)]*

### **[WHO launches campaign to halt smoking in Africa.](#)**

*Saturday, December 05, 2009*

The World Health Organisation launched a campaign on Friday to try to stop what could become a health catastrophe caused by rapidly rising levels of smoking in Africa. Reuters Health.

### **[Correlations between gene expression and mercury levels in blood of boys with and without autism.](#)**

*Saturday, December 05, 2009*

Autistic and typically developing children display different correlations between transcript levels and low levels of mercury and lead. Neurotoxicity Research.

*[See a related article: [Correlations of gene expression with blood lead levels in children with autism compared to typically developing controls](#)]*

### **[How Europe's discarded computers are poisoning Africa's kids.](#)**

*Saturday, December 05, 2009*

People in the West throw away millions of old computers every year. Hundreds of thousands of them end up in Africa, where children try to eke out a living by selling the scrap. But the toxic elements in the waste are slowly poisoning them. Der Spiegel.

### **[Birth defects rise from lack of tests.](#)**

*Friday, December 04, 2009*

Experts say a lack of pre-marital physical checks and pollution have pushed the number of Beijing babies with birth defects to 1.6 percent this year, twice as many as 10 years ago. Air pollution causes a higher rate of birth defects in the city than in the countryside, health officials said. China Daily.

*[See a related article about air pollution's effects on children in India: [Children facing brunt of air pollution](#)]*

### **[Agent Orange's lethal legacy: For U.S., a record of neglect.](#)**

*Friday, December 04, 2009*

In the 30 years since Agent Orange was recognized publicly as a potential health threat, the federal government has established a record of neglect, even as the health fallout has spread, a Tribune investigation finds. Chicago Tribune, Illinois.

*[See related articles: [Agent Orange: Congenital deformities plague Vietnam: US slow to help](#); [Agent Orange's lethal legacy: At former U.S. bases in Vietnam, a potent poison is clear and present danger](#); [Iraq/Afghanistan deployment tied to respiratory woes](#), [Military: Burn pits caused illnesses](#) and [Navy will pay to restudy Lejeune water](#)]*

### **[Out of plumb: When water treatment causes lead contamination.](#)**

*Thursday, December 03, 2009*

In recent years contamination with lead has emerged as an unintended consequence of water treatment changes aimed at improving water quality. Environmental Health Perspectives.



**[Momentum builds for meaningful TSCA reform.](#)**

*Thursday, December 03, 2009*

Two developments on Dec. 2 have encouraged backers of EPA's planned rewrite of the Toxic Substances Control Act that a meaningful reform is possible for the law, which is the key statute allowing the government to regulate industrial chemicals because of health risks they pose to the public. Occupational Health & Safety.

[See a related article: [States: Federal toxics laws too weak](#)]

**[Toxic chemicals found in a third of children's toys: study.](#)**

*Thursday, December 03, 2009*

A third of the most popular children's toys in the United States this year contain harmful chemicals including lead, cadmium, arsenic and mercury, a US consumer group said Wednesday. Agence France-Presse.

[See a related article: [Safety isn't guaranteed in Toyland](#)]

**[Chemicals in waterways untracked, unchecked.](#)**

*Wednesday, December 02, 2009*

Growing awareness of pharmaceuticals in Iowa waterways has eclipsed a broader problem of chemicals from consumer products that are untracked and unchecked, a new report said. Mason City Globe Gazette, Iowa.

[See a related article: [Health Department designated as medications disposal site](#)]

**[PennEnvironment: New report presents policy to tackle environmental health threats of Marcellus Shale drilling.](#)**

*Wednesday, December 02, 2009*

In the face of ongoing environmental damage and public health threats posed by Marcellus Shale drilling, a statewide environmental advocacy group released a new policy blueprint Tuesday. Gant Daily, Pennsylvania.

**[Healthy, organic and cheap school lunches?](#)**

*Wednesday, December 02, 2009*

For the first time, a small, privately held start-up is pushing to produce what are by all accounts fresh, healthful, all-natural school meals for just under \$3 apiece. USA Today.

The Collaborative on Health and the Environment offers this information as a service but does not endorse any of the events, articles or announcements.

Companion bulletins are available for different audiences:

- For those interested in general children's environmental health: [http://www.healthandenvironment.org/working\\_groups/childrens\\_health/bulletins](http://www.healthandenvironment.org/working_groups/childrens_health/bulletins)
- For those interested in environmental health in Washington State and the Pacific Northwest: <http://washington.chenw.org/bulletins.html>

While there is overlap with this bulletin, there are some events and announcements unique to those bulletins.

If you would like to join the Collaborative on Health and the Environment (CHE) and the LDDI Working Group, please complete the application on the CHE website:

<http://www.healthandenvironment.org/application> Joining CHE means receiving up to four email messages a month from the CHE National listserv. CHE costs nothing to join and the benefit is shared information and opportunities for further engagement, if you choose. Be sure to mark that you want to join the Learning and Developmental Disabilities Initiative Working Group at the bottom of the application.

Nancy Snow  
**Collaborative on Health and the Environment**

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