



3 January 2007

Legco Environmental Panel

Re: Control of Volatile Organic Compounds - VOC.

Honorable members,

Limiting VOC is a matter of indoor public health as well as outdoor air pollution. 10% of Hong Kong children have asthma. The adults here today are trying to pretend that their products - which deliver VOCs into the face of children at close range - do not significantly pollute the air. They talk of Guangdong and the outlying islands. Let's talk about the average 440 sq ft home, with the air con running and the windows closed instead.

1. VOCs build up in the home when there is not enough fresh air coming in, which happens when the windows are closed. VOCs create toxic gas, which gets trapped.
2. Many things can cause asthma symptoms to start; these are called triggers. It is important to try to control your child's exposure to the triggers that make his or her asthma worse. **Strong perfumes/odors** - Your child should avoid things that have a strong smell such as cleaning products, *perfumes*, *hair spray*, tar, fresh paint, gasoline, insect sprays, and room deodorizers.¹
3. We do not agree that "cosmetic is not a major contributor of Volatile Organic Compounds (VOC) and air pollution." People spend most of their time indoor, and the levels of VOC that build up in the home from personal care products, including cosmetics (which are not fragrance-free) are a health risk as shown above.
4. Far from harmless, hairspray from a pressurized container sprayed directly in a child's face can kill them.
5. There are two main problems with fragrances. The first—that fragrances contain highly toxic chemicals—affects everyone. The second problem affects only people who are chemically sensitive, or have related health problems such as chronic fatigue syndrome, fibromyalgia, asthma, and immune dysfunction. The neurotoxic, carcinogenic, endocrine-disrupting and other toxic chemicals contained in fragrances can make anyone sick in large enough quantities.
6. We are concerned that the cosmetic industry does not know that "edible" (as in "edible alcohol") means safe to eat - not safe to inhale.

Annelise Connell
Clear The Air

¹ <http://www.childrenshospital.org/az/Site617/mainpageS617P0.html>