A NONPARTISAN GUIDE FOR PUBLIC LEADERS, CANDIDATES, CAMPAIGN STAFF, AND COMMUNITY LEADERS



Health First

Protecting Families from Toxic Chemicals in Food, Drinking Water, and Communities

Families in Alaska face growing health and cost pressures in almost every aspect of their daily lives.

At the same time, as families struggle with rising costs, many are also confronting a growing and unsettling reality: toxic chemicals and plastics are showing up in everyday essentials, from food packaging to drinking water.

Public concern is broad and bipartisan

Families are tired of being told everything is fine while their kids get sicker, rates of chronic disease rise, and toxic exposures continue to increase.

Recent polling shows deep concern across the country about the health impacts of chemicals and plastics:

92% of Americans feel that protecting clean air and safe drinking water should be treated as a top public health priority.

87% of registered voters are concerned about the chemicals added to plastics.

88% of Americans are concerned about the health impacts of microplastics.

Research increasingly links chemical exposures and rising rates of illness

Peer-reviewed studies increasingly connect the rise of toxic and untested chemicals to concerning disease trends over the past few decades, including:

- Nearly 80% increase in cancer in young people
- 84% increase in infertility
- Rates of dementia and Alzheimer's disease are expected to double by 2060

Strong support for more government protections

Voters are frustrated that weak regulations allow chemical companies to sell and profit from hazardous chemicals that make people sick, while taxpayers are left to bear the health consequences and cleanup costs.

There is strong support from across the political spectrum for leaders who will:

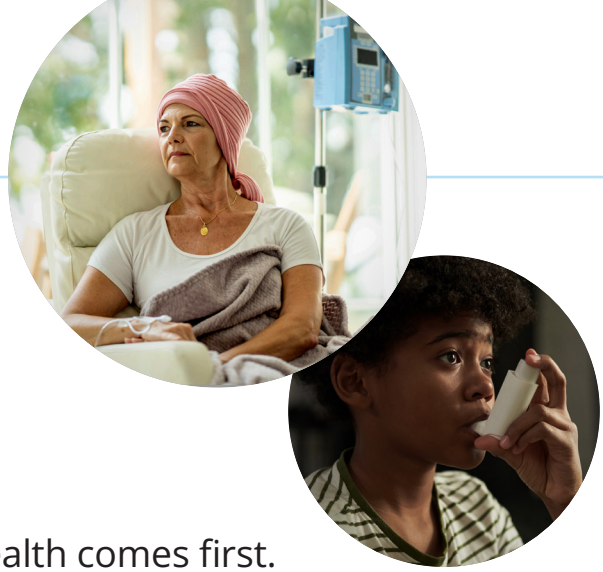
- Put health first
- Reduce toxic exposures
- Hold polluters accountable

safer states An Alliance for a Healthier World

ACAT Alaska Community Action on Toxics

THE PROBLEM:

Health protections haven't kept pace



Everyone deserves to live in a world where our health comes first.

Yet today, despite evidence of serious health harms, some companies continue to make and use harmful chemicals and plastics, exploiting weak, unenforced, or outdated rules. These chemicals end up in neighborhoods, food, drinking water, air, consumer products, and workplaces.

Plastics, PFAS, and toxic chemicals are hurting families and communities

Across the country, communities face preventable threats to their health from PFAS "forever chemicals," plastics, and other toxic chemicals linked to cancer, infertility, and other serious diseases.

The harm is not shared equally

Communities living near chemical or plastic manufacturing facilities or disposal sites often face higher exposures and disease burdens. Babies and children are especially vulnerable to toxic chemicals.

Hidden costs that taxpayers can't afford

The health and cleanup costs associated with harmful chemicals and plastics total **trillions of dollars,** which is borne by taxpayers, families, and local governments, not by chemical companies who caused the problem.

DATA SNAPSHOT

45% of Americans have toxic PFAS "forever chemicals" in their drinking water.

More than 5,000 tons of toxic chemicals are released from products into homes and workplaces annually.

Hundreds of plastic chemicals were recently found in pregnant women and 96 toxic chemicals were recently found in toddlers.

The number one cause of death for firefighters is cancer.

The Solution:

Health-first policies that work



The good news is that effective solutions already exist and are moving forward in many states and cities across the country, with bipartisan support from firefighters, nurses, families, and farmers.

The best solutions for protecting our health include:

TRANSPARENCY:

People have a right to know what they are exposed to.

People deserve clear information about the chemicals used in products and manufacturing, as well as those showing up in drinking water and food, and their potential hazards. Transparency empowers consumers, protects workers, and supports sound public health policy.

SAFER SOLUTIONS:

Designing a safer, healthier future for everyone.

Governments, businesses, and institutions should invest in safer alternatives to toxic chemicals and products—for example, safer PFAS-free firefighting foams are now available and effective thanks to state actions that have driven their development.

BAN THE BAD:

Phase out the most toxic chemicals and plastics.

Some chemicals and plastics are simply too dangerous to keep using. Highly toxic chemicals and plastics should be phased out of products, packaging, manufacturing, and buildings, starting with well-documented threats such as PFAS "forever chemicals," certain plastic additives (phthalates, bisphenols), PVC (vinyl), and toxic flame retardants.

ACCOUNTABILITY AND FAIRNESS:

Polluters pay.

It is not fair for communities to bear the costs of toxic pollution. Polluters should be held financially responsible for the harm caused to people and the environment. Governments must also act swiftly to support impacted communities and enforce strong health protections.

For references information, please visit this resource on our website:

Challenges Facing ALASKA

Alaska faces unique environmental health challenges as toxic chemicals and microplastics travel north on wind and ocean currents, threatening ecosystems, public health, and traditional ways of life.

- The Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation has identified PFAS contamination in soil or water at 519 locations across the state. These toxic "forever chemicals" have also been found in drinking water, fish, wildlife, and locally grown food.
- Microplastics have been found in Alaska's fish, seabirds, seals, walrus, and whales, raising concerns about their impacts on wildlife and human health.
- Indigenous and rural communities face disproportionate exposure to toxic pollution, threatening traditional fishing, hunting, food security, and cultural ways of life.

The good news is that Alaska is taking steps to address these challenges

- Alaska can establish enforceable, health-protective PFAS drinking water standards that reflect current science and eliminate non-essential uses of PFAS in favor of safer alternatives.
- Alaska can ban intentionally added micro-plastics in consumer products, and require a statewide microplastics testing plan.
- Alaska can further protect public health by phasing out polystyrene food packaging, eliminating single-use plastics, and requiring disclosure of harmful chemicals in menstrual and other personal care products.
- Alaska can advance legislation to ban toxic chemicals in children's products, protecting their developing bodies and brains

VOICES FROM ALASKA

"Raised on a homestead outside Fairbanks, Heather Koponen has spent her life protecting Alaska's people and environment. When she discovered PFAS contamination in her own well water, she hauled safe drinking water, helped neighbors test their wells, and raised awareness. She traveled to Juneau to advocate for legislation addressing PFAS and plastics, and continues her community outreach to help protect the health of Alaskans today and for generations to come."

Heather Koponen, Fairbanks Resident and Environmental Health Advocate

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

Safer States is a fiscally sponsored alliance of Toxic Free Future, a 501(c)(3) nonpartisan 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. We do not endorse or oppose any candidate or political party. This guide is provided for educational purposes only to inform voters and decision makers about issues relevant to our mission.

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