

Healthy Communities and Safer Chemicals

A Vision for California

Decades of chemical policies that have not adequately embraced precautionary action have produced widespread environmental and human health threats from toxic chemicals. The resulting impacts fall heavily on the most vulnerable Californians, including women and children, communities of color, and low-wage workers. Recent unraveling of environmental and health policies at the federal level invites—and demands—California leadership. Governor Newsom has already articulated a strong commitment to environmental justice and an ambitious goal of zero diesel pollution by 2030. With his bold vision, the Governor has the opportunity to:

- Lead the nation in protecting people and the environment from hazardous chemicals;
- Protect workers and provide environmental justice to California communities; and
- Stimulate innovation in science and industry for a healthy, strong economy.

With his leadership, the Governor can remediate existing problems and prevent future ones. We recommend five feasible and actionable changes to substantially improve California's environmental health protections.

THE STRATEGY—FIVE AMBITIOUS 2030 GOALS

1) Toxic-Free Communities

Tens of thousands of contaminated sites burden disadvantaged communities in California. Many sites are vulnerable to flooding or fire, or are contaminating groundwater resources. Getting the state on-track to cleaning up and mitigating toxic sites by 2030 will protect communities and ensure safe water supplies.

2) Toxic-Free Workplaces

Over 50,000 people in the U.S. die prematurely each year from diseases caused by hazardous substances in the workplace. Worker protections have historically lagged behind environmental protections, and a commitment to safe and healthy workplaces by 2030 is long overdue.

3) 21st Century Science

New scientific tools allow scientists and the public to detect and track hazards in air, water, soil, food, and people, and to rapidly predict and identify hazardous chemicals. California needs better and more integrated data to catch problems early, set goals and measure success.

4) Safer Chemicals and Products

People in California want safer chemicals and products, and have consistently demanded the right to know if there are toxic ingredients in the products they use. California should strengthen existing policies, and invest in strategies that foster safer chemicals and technologies.

5) Safe and Sustainable Pest Management

Pesticides are among the most dangerous chemicals used in California. Many pesticides can cause acute illnesses, chronic health effects, and environmental damage. California must shift toward safer, more sustainable pest management by 2030 to protect farmworkers, communities, water and soil.

THE PATH TO SUCCESS—ACHIEVABLE ACTIONS

To achieve the five ambitious 2030 goals outlined here, the Newsom administration can apply a variety of strategies, including ones summarized below. We thank Governor Newsom for his leadership and look forward to supporting him as he leads California toward a healthy future.

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The Details

TOXIC-FREE COMMUNITIES

Tens of thousands of contaminated sites burden disadvantaged communities in California. Many sites are vulnerable to flooding or fire, or are contaminating groundwater resources. Getting the state on-track to cleaning up and mitigating toxic sites by 2030 will protect communities and ensure safe water supplies.

LEGISLATION AND BUDGET:

- Restructure the DTSC fees to eliminate the budget deficit and ensure clean-up of orphan sites.
- Create a governing board for DTSC to ensure timely decision-making.
- Reestablish and strengthen the DTSC pollution prevention (P2) program.
- Require companies to benchmark their toxic chemical footprint and track changes over time.
- Fund the pilot projects selected through the Community Protection and Hazardous Waste Reduction Initiative.
- Create a fund for development of innovative treatment and clean-up technologies that avoid shifting burdens from one vulnerable community to another.

SPECIFIC 100 DAY ACTIONS:

- Convene a multi-stakeholder group to develop a proposal for eliminating the structural deficit at DTSC.

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TOXIC-FREE WORKPLACES

Over 50,000 people in the U.S. die prematurely each year from diseases caused by hazardous substances in the workplace. Worker protections have historically lagged behind environmental protections, and a commitment to safe and healthy workplaces by 2030 is long overdue.

LEGISLATION AND BUDGET:

- Provide Cal/OSHA with resources sufficient to rebuild the division's educational, analytical and enforcement capacity in industrial hygiene.
- Direct Cal/OSHA, in consultation with CalEPA, to reform or replace the current outdated workplace Permissible Exposure Limits (PELs) with a more comprehensive strategy to protect worker health.
- Direct Cal/OSHA, CalOES, and the California Interagency Refinery Task Force to expand the California refinery process safety regulations to apply to high-hazard chemical facilities.

SPECIFIC 100 DAY ACTIONS:

- Create an Interagency Lead Poisoning Prevention Initiative to ensure that agencies work together toward eliminating lead poisoning in California workplaces and communities.

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21ST CENTURY SCIENCE

New scientific tools allow scientists and the public to detect and track hazards in air, water, soil, food, and people, and to rapidly predict and identify hazardous chemicals. California needs better and more integrated data to catch problems early, set goals and measure success.

LEGISLATION AND BUDGET:

- Correct the pay disparity between environmental scientists and engineers in California government.
- Increase and stabilize funding for the Biomonitoring California Program.
- Increase funding for environmental monitoring of toxic chemicals in air, water, soil, food, and workplaces, including for emerging chemicals.
- Direct OEHHA to use predictive toxicology to determine and list the hazard traits of chemicals.

SPECIFIC 100 DAY ACTIONS:

- Direct CalEPA and HHS Agency to strengthen and integrate data on environmental chemicals and disease, and present all environmental monitoring data on a common online platform in a user-friendly mapping platform.

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SAFER CHEMICALS AND PRODUCTS

People in California want safer chemicals and products, and have consistently demanded the right to know if there are toxic ingredients in the products they use. California should strengthen existing policies, and invest in strategies that foster safer chemicals and technologies.

LEGISLATION AND BUDGET:

- Strengthen the Safer Consumer Products Program with greater funding and authority.
- Move the Safe Cosmetics Program from CDPH to CalEPA, and increase its funding support.
- Support legislation requiring disclosure of ingredients in products, such as food packaging and fragrances in personal care products, limiting trade secrets where ingredients are known to be harmful.
- Fund Centers for Green Chemistry at California universities, and prizes for bold design solutions.
- Incentivize cleaner industries to locate in areas that are lagging economically, to provide safe jobs for California workers.

SPECIFIC 100 DAY ACTIONS:

- Direct CalEPA to create an Interagency Framework for addressing entire classes of chemicals for replacement, including flame retardants, lead & compounds, and PFAS chemicals.
- Issue an Executive Order requiring safer chemicals in California's Environmentally Preferable Purchasing (EPP) programs and in new low-income housing construction.

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SAFE AND SUSTAINABLE PEST MANAGEMENT

Pesticides are among the most dangerous chemicals used in California. Many pesticides can cause acute illnesses, chronic health effects, and environmental damage. California must shift toward safer, more sustainable pest management by 2030 to protect farmworkers, communities, water and soil.

LEGISLATION AND BUDGET:

- Reform the Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR) by renaming it the Department of Pest Management (DPM) and revising its mission to include promoting ecological pest control methods and pesticide use reduction.
- Move pesticide risk assessment functions to OEHHA.
- Fund research, incentives, and adoption of non-chemical pest control methods.
- Adopt sustainable procurement policies for food purchased by state institutions.
- Direct DPR to develop a plan, with annual benchmarks, for reducing use of the most hazardous pesticides, including organophosphates, fumigants, and neonicotinoids, with the goal of eliminating dependence on these pesticides by 2030.

SPECIFIC 100 DAY ACTIONS:

- Direct DPR to cancel the registration of chlorpyrifos to fully mitigate the serious neurodevelopmental risks identified in the risk assessment.
- Direct CARB to include pesticide reduction in strategies to decrease greenhouse gas emissions under SB 32 and toxic air contaminants under AB 617.

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Guiding Principles

Each of the roadmaps toward achieving the 2030 goals must incorporate principles of equity and inclusion, including the following:

Equity and Justice

Environmental policies must address race, ethnicity, age, gender, and other vulnerabilities to protect at-risk populations. Communities should be involved in collecting data, mapping hazards, setting priorities, and developing solutions to ensure a transparent process for decision-making.

Right-to-Know

The public must have easy access to information about chemicals in their environment, workplaces, and products.

Science-Based Goals

Agencies must set and track measurable targets to reduce or eliminate chemical hazards. California should develop methods to rapidly identify and address emerging hazards.

Comprehensive Solutions

California needs an inter-agency framework for solving complex environmental and occupational health problems across relevant jurisdictions and environmental media, starting with addressing lead poisoning and perfluoro/polyfluorinated chemicals ("PFAS").

Precaution

Activities should focus on protecting human health and the environment when there is scientific uncertainty.