



Toxins for any weather

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Which chemicals are in your outdoor clothing? Outdoor clothing brands are selling womens and childrens clothes with perfluorinated and polyfluorinated chemicals (PFCs) and other hazardous chemicals, according to findings from two independent laboratories commissioned by Greenpeace Germany (1). The findings were revealed by Greenpeace Germany today in the report "Chemistry for any weather" (2). The report shows that products from Jack Wolfskin, The North Face, Patagonia, Kaikkiilla and Marmot contain noticeable concentrations of toxic perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA). Both the Mammot and Vaude jackets also contain high concentrations of fluorotelomer alcohols, which can break down into PFOA. "The outdoor clothing industry advertises its products featuring images of pristine nature. But the reality is that the harmful substances used by this industry are now to be found in the environment and in the blood of humans all over the world," says Manfred Santen, Greenpeace Germany expert. Greenpeace calls on the outdoor clothing industry to ban PFCs from production and to further develop fluorine-free alternatives. The textile manufacturers need to replace these hazardous chemicals with environmental-friendly alternatives. In particular all PFCs must be tested under the chemicals regulation for the European Union. With a turnover of more than a billion euros, Germany is the largest European market for outdoor clothing. "The industry has gone from being a specialist supplier to a producer of trendy everyday wear", says Santen. "Consumers looking for waterproof clothing have the right to know what their rain gears contains and be able to make a choice. There are already several manufacturers offering fluorine-free alternatives." Fluorine compounds are persistent and can hardly break down in the environment. Contained in food, air and drinking water, these chemicals end up in human organisms. Recent studies link PFOA (4) exposure to reduced fertility, thyroid diseases and immune disorders. The Greenpeace test results for hormonally active nonylphenol ethoxylates (NPEs) and plasticizers (phthalates) are also worrisome (5). The highest concentration of NPEs was found in a childs rain jacket from Seven Summits. The highest value for phthalates was found in a childs poncho from Northland. Notes to editors: (1) The outdoor brands products were tested for PFCs in the membranes, coatings and finishes. (2) The Greenpeace report, Chemistry For Any Weather, is posted at www.greenpeace.de (3) Weatherproof alternatives include textiles made from membranes of polyester or polyurethane. This clothing is also windproof, has breathability and can withstand a downpour. Products containing controversial PFCs are superior to fluorine-free alternatives only with regard to oil repellency. (4) see page 8 and 9 and references on page 43 (5) NPEs results are on page 20
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