

# WWF-UK: Environment minister's blood contaminated

## Environment minister's blood contaminated

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The Rt. Hon Alun Michael MP, Environment Minister, is contaminated with dozens of industrial chemicals according to results of a blood test coordinated by WWF.

The chemicals found in the Minister include ones that were banned decades ago. The results uncovered the following chemicals: brominated flame retardants, perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA), breakdown products of DDT and twenty five different PCBs. The latter two chemicals were banned in the UK in the 1970s. All of these chemicals are persistent, in that they pollute the environment for a long time, and have been found to build up in people and wildlife.

"Alun Michael is contaminated with industrial chemicals whose effects are largely unknown," said Elizabeth Salter-Green, head of toxics programme. "It is hard to believe that legislators have been willing to allow this uncontrolled experiment to continue for so many years."

Thirty three chemicals were found in Alun Michael's blood - 32 per cent of the 103 chemicals tested for. Alun Michael had the lowest number of chemicals found in the survey of the 14 European environment and health ministers tested by WWF in June 2004. The Ministers had an average of 37 chemicals in their blood, with the highest number of chemicals found in any one minister being 43.

Chemical contamination is a threat to wildlife and people. The chemicals found in ministers also contaminate polar bears, dolphins, birds of prey and many other species even in the most remote environments. Although 86 per cent of the 2,500 chemicals used in large quantities do not have enough safety information publicly available to do a basic safety assessment, research increasingly links chemicals to cancers, allergies, reproductive problems and defects in children's development.

Many of the chemicals found in the ministers' blood samples are persistent, bio-accumulative and capable of disrupting the hormone systems of wildlife and people. The ability of some chemicals to interfere with our hormones has only relatively recently been discovered by scientists and even more recently acknowledged by the chemical industry.

The Department of Health experts who advised Alun Michael on the results of his test expressed no surprise in finding him to be contaminated with man-made chemicals that are in current use as well as ones that have been banned decades ago.

"The lack of concern shown by Department of Health experts is extremely worrying," said Elizabeth Salter-Green. "From their analysis we are to believe that nothing is untoward whereas cutting edge research has shown that fetuses developing in the womb are exquisitely sensitive to certain chemicals at trace levels. Therefore to come out with this advice is misleading."

The tests are one of WWF's contributions to the debate within the European Union on

REACH - the proposed new chemical law that should lead to the identification and phasing out of the most harmful chemicals.

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The only way to prevent these chemicals and other pollution getting into the atmosphere, ground and water is to stop producing it. But if politicians continue to go around grovelling to the whims of directors of multi national companies so that they can continue this mass pollution programme to get contributions for their own political party it will never end – it is called legalised mass murder. Politicians and multi national company directors need to learn that this sign \$ is not the sign of GOD. Unfortunately “some” are either so corrupt or stupid they don’t want to know this.

Further information

To find out more about the effect of toxic chemicals and what you can do visit our [\\_and Health campaign\\_](#) .

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