



Risk in Perspective

Risk-Based Environmental Advocacy



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"EDF's recent reports, Toxic Ignorance and The Chemical Scorecard, lay the groundwork for future risk-based reforms of the Toxic Substances Control Act, the Clean Air Act, and the EPA's Toxic Release Inventory."

As environmental policy becomes more risk-oriented, it will become crucial for stakeholders to become knowledgeable about the processes of risk assessment, management, and communication. Yet one of the most important stakeholder groups, environmental advocacy organizations, have resisted the use of risk analysis for moral, technical, and/or tactical reasons. An exception within the advocacy community is the Environmental Defense Fund (EDF), which has an aggressive, forward-looking approach to the use of risk analysis in favor of environmental protection. In this issue of **RISK IN PERSPECTIVE**, we review two of EDF's most recent risk-oriented projects: *Toxic Ignorance* and *The Chemical Scorecard*.

TOXIC IGNORANCE

Effective implementation of chemical risk management requires scientific information on the risks of chemical exposures to human health and ecosystems that is publicly available. In its 1997 report *Toxic Ignorance*, EDF revealed some seri-

ous gaps in public information about whether widely used chemicals can produce particular types of toxicity.

Based on a random sample of selected high-use chemicals (N = 100) and a review of publicly-accessible databases, EDF concluded that 70+ % of compounds lack a toxicity database that is necessary for even a preliminary risk assessment. A basic database, as defined by an international consensus standard, includes rudimentary information on acute toxicity, repeated dose toxicity, genetic toxicity (in vitro), genetic toxicity (in vivo), reproductive toxicity, and developmental toxicity (teratogenicity). Although more than 90% of the sampled chemicals had been tested for acute toxicity (usually death), more than 50% of the chemicals had not been tested for any form of chronic toxicity.

The EDF report is useful for a variety of reasons. It is being used in the public arena to encourage chemical manufacturers to make larger investments in toxicity testing. It is

