THE PROGRAM

What are we doing to prevent these harmful chemical exposures?

In partnership with the BlueGreen Alliance, the UFCW is gearing up to **Put Breast Cancer Out of Work** to:

- Talk about the role of chemicals in breast cancer and other chronic diseases;
- Build coalitions with other unions, environmentalists and women's health groups to raise public awareness of the role of chemicals in breast cancer;
- Work for new policies that regulate chemicals using examples of what cities, states and leading companies are doing; and
- Equip workers and their employers to join the do-it-yourself safer chemicals effort to prevent harmful exposures that lead to disease.

Here's how you and your local union can help **Put Breast Cancer Out of Work:**

1. Look for **Putting Breast Cancer Out of Work** trainings at union conferences and meetings OR request training for your local union.
2. Talk to your co-workers, family and neighbors about breast cancer and preventing exposures to harmful chemicals.
3. Visit **www.ChemHAT.org** to learn more about breast cancer and how we can prevent it by switching to safer chemicals.
4. Use your local union's collective voice to join the safer chemicals effort by winning health and safety improvements such as substituting less hazardous chemicals or using engineering and design controls to prevent worker exposures.

For more information on these efforts and for a version of this brochure with footnotes, go to www.ChemHAT.org.

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Let's Put Breast Cancer Out Of Work!

Breast cancer is caused by the interaction of genes and environment

THE PROBLEM

Breast Cancer is more and more common.

Worldwide, breast cancer is the most commonly diagnosed cancer and the leading cause of cancer death in women. Despite decades of research, the number of women diagnosed with breast cancer continues to rise, particularly among women under 50 who have no family history of breast cancer. In the United States, one in eight women will be diagnosed with breast cancer in her lifetime.

Like other chronic diseases, genes, behaviors and the environment all contribute to a woman's risk of developing breast cancer.

People always say the same things about breast cancer. What's new?

In the last year researchers have identified a link between workplace chemical exposures and increased breast cancer risk. The key finding of the six-year study was that **young women working in the automotive plastics and food packing industry are five times more likely to have breast cancer than their neighbors working in other industries.**[1]

Researchers found that women who worked for 10 years in the automotive, agricultural, plastics, canning, and the casino, bar and racetrack sectors had elevated breast cancer risk. The highest risk factors – nearly 5 times higher than in the control group – were for premenopausal women working in the automotive plastics and food-canning sectors.

A later review showed that these workers have higher-than-normal exposure to and body burden of carcinogenic and endocrine disrupting chemicals, which are chemicals that act like estrogens and other hormones. Workers are also exposed to mixtures of chemicals rather than just one at a time. Exposure to complex mixtures may cause worse health effects than the sum of the chemicals' individual effects.[2]

Follow-up reports have concluded that preventing environmental exposures to harmful, endocrine-disrupting chemicals is the most promising path to decreasing new cases of breast cancer. And the US government is planning to develop a new national breast cancer strategy to target research and money at prevention of breast cancer rather than just diagnosis and treatment.[3]

You can find more detail about these studies and reports at **www.ChemHAT.org**.

What are endocrine disrupting chemicals?

These chemicals act like estrogens and other hormones in the body by blocking hormones and disrupting the body's normal functions. They can change the normal level of hormones in the body by stopping or causing more hormone production. The chemicals can also change the way hormones travel throughout the body by attaching themselves to receptors that hormones normally use, which changes our bodies' processes normally controlled by hormones.[4]

A chemical of concern to UFCW workers, particularly those women who work in food manufacturing/ canning plants, is Bisphenol-A or BPA. The BPA is found in the epoxy lining of the metal food can and is released into the air during the food canning process.

Examples of other endocrine disrupting chemicals include styrene, acrylonitrile, vinyl chloride, phthalates, brominated flame retardants, heavy metals, some solvents, and complex chemical mixtures.

I don't work in any of the industries mentioned, so I'm not at risk. Right?

The implications of these studies are broad and affect workers and consumers across the world. These types of chemicals are in many types of workplaces including those in the study like plastics manufacturing and food canning, but also in metalworking, rubber, oil refining, coated paper manufacturing, and the chemical industry.

What's more, the chemicals used in manufacturing end up in the products that we use at home like cleaning supplies, cosmetics and food packaging. And exposure to these chemicals can also affect men – even resulting in cases of male breast cancer as well as infertility and testicular and prostate cancer.

1 Brophy, J.,"Breast cancer risk in relation to occupations with exposure to carcinogens and endocrine disruptors: a Canadian case–control study," Environmental Health Journal. (November 19, 2012).

2 DeMatteo, R., et al. "Chemical Exposures of Women Workers in the Plastics Industry with Particular Reference to Breast Cancer and Reproductive Hazards." NEW SOLUTIONS: A Journal of Environmental and Occupational Health Policy. (Volume 22, Number 4/2012).

3 Interagency Breast Cancer and Environmental Research Coordinating Committee (IBCERCC). "Breast Cancer and the Environment: Prioritizing Prevention." (February 2013).

4 National Resources Defense Council. "Endocrine Disruptors." http://www.nrdc.org/health/effects/qendoc.asp