

New study finds toxic chemicals in most products labeled stain- or water-resistant

PFAS “forever chemicals” found in rain jackets, hiking pants, mattress pads, comforters, napkins & tablecloths. Report also reveals PFAS-free items are in use.

SEATTLE, WA, UNITED STATES, January 26, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- A [new study](#) released today by [Toxic-Free Future](#) finds toxic chemicals in most products labeled stain- or water-resistant, with 72% testing positive for

PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances). Items that were found to contain “forever chemicals” include rain jackets, hiking pants, mattress pads, comforters, napkins, and tablecloths. The report, called Toxic Convenience: The hidden costs of forever chemicals in stain- and water-resistant products, also reveals that PFAS-free products are available in each of the three main product categories studied, proving that alternatives are in use.

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Erika Schreder, study author and science director for Toxic-Free Future

The first-ever release of brand-specific information on the presence of PFAS in key home furnishings, the study analyzed a total of 60 products purchased from 10 major retailers. Out of 47 products marketed as stain- or water-resistant, the majority (72%) contained PFAS. Conversely, all products tested that were not marketed as stain- or water-resistant were found to be PFAS-free.

“Our testing finds continued, unnecessary use of the toxic

chemicals known as PFAS in outdoor clothing and home furnishings like bedding and tablecloths,” said Erika Schreder, study author and science director for Toxic-Free Future. “When companies use PFAS to make products stain- or water-resistant, they are using chemicals that contaminate homes, drinking water, and breast milk with highly persistent chemicals that can cause cancer and harm the immune system.”

At least one product from every retailer was found to contain PFAS. The study tested products



from retailers including Amazon, Bed Bath & Beyond, Costco, Dick's Sporting Goods, Kohl's, Macy's, REI, Target, TJX, and Walmart. Testing for total fluorine and PFAS was conducted at independent scientific laboratories.

"Retailers, like REI, can stop contributing to this toxic trail of pollution by ensuring the products they sell are free of PFAS," said Mike Schade, director of Toxic-Free Future's Mind the Store program. "As a company committed to sustainability and one of the biggest outdoor retailers in the U.S., REI has a responsibility to lead the outdoor industry away from these toxic chemicals."

Products were grouped into three categories: outdoor gear, bedding, and tablecloths/napkins, with 20 items in each product category. The analysis focused on commonly-used product categories and found PFAS-containing items in each of the three groups.

"Rain jackets shouldn't cause cancer—but for some of us, that just might be the case," said Emily Donovan, co-founder of Clean Cape Fear. "These companies sold a convenience product to consumers without fully disclosing the toxic trade-off. In my region of North Carolina, our drinking water has been severely contaminated from the manufacture of PFAS chemicals. No one's drinking water should be contaminated for a rain jacket."

The study also reveals that manufacturers have been using a mixture of PFAS, including compounds currently banned in other countries. Testing found both older PFAS, already banned in the European Union and phased out by major U.S. manufacturers, as well as newer PFAS. Although the newer PFAS compounds are commonly believed to be the most in use, 74% of items with PFAS tested positive for the older PFAS.

"PFAS contamination of the Arctic poses a particular threat to the health of Indigenous peoples who are reliant on traditional foods as essential to their physical, spiritual, and cultural sustenance," said Pamela Miller, executive director of Alaska Community Action on Toxics and co-chair of the International Pollutants Elimination Network (IPEN). "It is time to stop this terrible injustice, hold manufacturers accountable, and urgently establish national and international bans for the entire class of PFAS."

The study found items in each category that were marketed as stain- and/or water-resistant yet appeared to be free of PFAS. "Some companies are using PFAS-free alternatives, but until regulations ban PFAS in products, these dangerous chemicals will continue to be used in our raincoats and bedding," said Laurie Valeriano, executive director of Toxic-Free Future. "We need urgent action at the state and federal levels to solve the PFAS crisis, including by quickly stopping its use in products we wear and use in our homes."

The report also provides recommendations on what consumers can do and how manufacturers, retailers, and state and federal leaders can act to bring a swift end to the use of toxic "forever chemicals."

The study comes during a national campaign calling on REI and other retailers to ban PFAS in outdoor apparel and other textiles. Since November 2021, more than 60,000 REI customers have signed petitions and sent e-mails to the REI CEO and Board calling for action on PFAS. In December, a group of more than 100 local, state, and national organizations sent a letter to REI calling on the company to lead the outdoor apparel industry in a bold transition away from the entire class of PFAS.

More information on the study Toxic Convenience: The hidden costs of forever chemicals in stain- and water-resistant products can be found at: <https://toxicfreefuture.org/pfas-in-stain-water-resistant-products-study>

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