

New report exposes retailers' failure to protect consumers from toxic chemicals and plastics

17 retailers receive failing grades—including 7-Eleven, Five Below, LL Flooring, McDonald's, and Sally Beauty

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EINPresswire.com/ -- A [new report released today](#) by Toxic-Free Future reveals that most of the largest retailers in the United States and Canada are failing to protect customers from toxic chemicals and harmful plastics found in the products and packaging sold on store shelves.



The 2024 Retailer Report Card finds that the average grade for retailers is a D+, with 17 retailers earning failing F grades, placing them in the report's Toxic Hall of Shame. Failing retailers include well-known brands such as 7-Eleven, Five Below, LL Flooring, McDonald's, Sally Beauty, among others.

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“With PFAS in our drinking water and toxics found in black plastic spatulas, it is shocking how little retailers are doing to help solve this health crisis linked to hazardous chemicals and plastics in consumer products,” said Cheri Peele, co-author of the 2024 Retailer Report Card and senior project manager for Toxic-Free Future. “Retailers

must require ingredient transparency, ban the most hazardous chemicals and plastics in products and packaging, and invest in safer solutions.”

Additional Highlights from the 2024 Retailer Report Card:

□ Four companies show leadership towards safer products: Apple, Sephora, Target, and Walmart are leading the charge toward safer solutions, earning an A- or higher, with policies in place to ban the worst chemicals and plastics and invest in safer alternatives, proving that it is possible.

- Minimal progress on safer solutions: 80% of retailers failed to implement policies that ensure safer alternatives to harmful chemicals and plastics – a critical component to achieve a safer marketplace.
- Lack of transparency: More than half of the retailers evaluated (54%) do not ask their suppliers to disclose the chemical ingredients used in their products. Without full transparency, it is impossible to assess the safety of chemicals in products sold to consumers.
- Toxic-Free Future's new roadmap, The Four Essential Elements for a Safer Marketplace, provides an enhanced grading system that gives a clear roadmap for retailers to follow to protect public health by selling safer products and packaging without harmful plastics and chemicals.

"Simply banning toxic chemicals isn't enough—retailers must go further to ensure that replacements are truly safer for consumers, communities, and workers," said Mike Schade, co-author of the 2024 Retailer Report Card and director of Toxic-Free Future's Mind the Store program. "Apple, Sephora, Target, and Walmart are setting a strong standard, scoring highest overall. With the holiday shopping season upon us, it's time for more retailers to follow their lead and mind the store."

Some companies, including Amazon, Office Depot, Staples, Target, and Walmart are getting credit in the Retailer Report Card for selling private-label products that are EPA Safer Choice certified. This certification is one of the only third-party certifications that fully evaluates the hazards of all chemical ingredients, ensuring chemicals are verifiably safer.

"As a fertility doctor, I am deeply concerned about exposure to toxic chemicals and plastics in everyday products, especially for women," said Lora Shahine, MD, reproductive endocrinologist at PNWF and clinical associate professor at the University of Washington in Seattle and host of the Baby or Bust Fertility podcast. "Research has shown that many of these substances can disrupt hormones, impact fertility, and even increase the risk of pregnancy complications. Retailers must take immediate action to reduce the presence of harmful chemicals such as PFAS and toxic plastics in the products we use, so that women and their families can make safer choices for their health and well-being."

Lowest-ranking retailers include restaurant and dollar store chains, which scored among the worst in the report. Restaurants like Subway and Yum! Brands, along with the dollar store chain Five Below, earned failing grades for their lack of action in addressing the use of toxic chemicals and harmful plastics. "Nine years after our call to eliminate hazardous chemicals, dollar stores still have progress to make," said Jose Bravo, national campaign coordinator of the Campaign for Healthier Solutions. "Serving millions – including many People of Color and low-income communities, Dollar General, Dollar Tree, and Family Dollar have a responsibility to provide safer products. It's time to lead by replacing harmful chemicals with safer alternatives. Communities deserve transparency and action now."

As a positive takeaway, the report found more than half of retailers are banning some dangerous chemicals and harmful plastics, with 68% percent of retailers making progress reducing certain

toxic chemicals and plastics such as per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) “forever chemicals” and polyvinyl chloride (PVC) plastic.

Several retailers in the beauty and personal care products sector are making good progress. Ulta Beauty, with a grade of B-, is recognized as the most improved retailer, nearly doubling its score since 2021. Both Sephora and Ulta Beauty are participating in ChemFORWARD’s Know Better, Do Better Collaborative, where companies in the beauty and personal care products sector are working together to comprehensively assess ingredients and find safer alternatives. A recent report demonstrates what retailers can do to improve their grades: assessing ingredients, filling data gaps with hazard assessments, and phasing out the most harmful chemicals.

“It is invaluable that the Retailer Report Card includes beauty justice metrics, highlighting the need for retailers to protect consumers from toxic chemicals in products marketed to people of color, such as skin lighteners and chemical hair straighteners,” said Micaela E. Martinez, Ph.D., director of environmental health for WE ACT for Environmental Justice. “Thanks to this evaluation, we have seen major retailers, including Sephora and Ulta Beauty, make significant strides in advancing beauty justice.”

The report outlines clear steps that retailers must take to improve their performance and protect public health. These include embracing The Four Essential Elements for a Safer Marketplace which includes: adopting comprehensive safer chemicals policies; requiring full transparency from suppliers; restricting toxic chemicals and plastics, such as PFAS and PVC, in products and packaging; and implementing safer solutions to chemicals and plastics of high concern...

For more, read the [full press release](#) and report at toxicfreefuture.org/retailer-report-card

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