



LOCAL NEWS | OBITUARIES | BUSINESS | CLASSIFIED | WEATHER

CITY | REGION

PRODUCT LICENSES TO BE SOLD - PAGE D5

Care Bears move to Canada

BUSINESS, D5

Fair features home
business options

DAILY MARKET
ROUNDUP - D6

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★ SECTION D

■ DAILY CHECKUP

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

Air fresheners, detergents emit hazardous fumes, study says

SEATTLE — The fumes that waft from top-selling air fresheners and laundry products contain dozens of chemicals, including several classified as toxic or hazardous, says a University of Washington study published

Wednesday.

None of the chemicals was listed on product labels, nor does the federal government require companies to disclose ingredients in fragrances, said study author Anne Steinemann, a professor of civil and environmental engineering and public affairs.

The health effects of the chemicals are unclear, but Steinemann launched her analysis after years of fielding complaints from people who said air fresheners and other household products made them dizzy, left them short of breath or caused headaches, seizures or

asthma attacks.

Steinemann's study focused on six widely used products: dryer sheets, fabric softener, laundry detergent, a liquid spray air freshener, a plug-in air freshener, and a solid disc deodorizer used in commercial-airplane toilets. Collectively, the six products gave off nearly 100 volatile organic compounds, or VOCs, including acetone, the eye-stinging ingredient in nail-polish remover and paint thinner. (VOCs are compounds that vaporize easily, like paint and gasoline fumes. Many VOCs are known to be harmful.)

The study didn't report the levels of individual chemicals, but all six of the products emitted at least one substance the federal government classifies as toxic or hazardous.

Among them are three chemicals the Environmental Protection Agency considers "hazardous air pollutants" with no safe exposure levels: acetaldehyde and 1,4-dioxane, both likely human carcinogens; and methyl chloride, which has been linked to liver, kidney and nervous-system damage in animals.

SEATTLE TIMES