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## **Cape Cod Women Learn Contaminant Levels in Homes:**

### *Study Reveals Gap in Knowledge about Health Effects of Common Pollutants*

November 17, 2004. Today, 100 women who participated in the Silent Spring Institute study\* showing higher breast cancer risk for long-term residents of Cape Cod, MA, will receive results for the levels of 89 household contaminants found in air and dust samples in their homes. Fourteen women will learn that researchers are offering to retest their homes because of higher-than-expected contaminant levels. The homes were tested for endocrine disrupting compounds (EDCs) – chemicals that can mimic or interfere with hormones. These chemicals are commonly found in household products such as some pesticides, detergents, plastics, furniture, building materials, and cosmetics.

“There are two key reasons to study the chemicals that are in people’s homes,” explained Dr. Julia Brody, Cape Cod study principal investigator and director of Silent Spring Institute. “We need to know about women’s everyday exposures to pollutants so we can study the effects on health and reduce exposures to pollutants as a precaution.”

For 30 of the 89 chemicals tested, the Silent Spring Institute results are the first measures ever reported from indoor environments. The study found 67 pollutants, with an average of 26 per home. Researchers are concerned about nine homes with residues of the carcinogenic flame retardant tris (2,3-dibromopropyl) phosphate, which was used in children’s sleepwear and other products until it was banned in the 1970’s. Retesting will aim to identify the source so it can be removed. Other chemicals triggering retesting are PCBs, DDT, lindane, chlordane, di(2-ethyl hexyl)phthalate (DEHP), piperonyl butoxide (PBO), bendiocarb, 2,4-D, and a metabolite of the pesticide carbaryl. The Massachusetts Department of Public Health will collaborate in the retesting.

“This is exactly the kind of research we need to truly end the breast cancer epidemic by learning about environmental causes that we can prevent,” said Massachusetts Breast Cancer Coalition (MBCC) President, Janis Lippman. “We are just beginning to understand the role of hormonal pollutants in breast cancer and other diseases, and the Silent Spring Institute study provides crucial information that we can now use to call on government and manufacturers to regulate and reformulate products currently in everyday use. We are all unknowingly bringing estrogen mimics home from the grocery and drug store. This study shows that industry’s reassurances that their products won’t lead to chemical exposures just aren’t true.” MBCC was instrumental in winning state funds for the study.

Women who participated in the study will receive information on the amount of specific contaminants in their homes and other homes tested, and the federal health guidelines for the

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\* study available upon request: [towne@silentspring.org](mailto:towne@silentspring.org)

39 compounds for which guidelines exist. Women will receive graphs of results for all of the homes, with identification information for only their own homes. Identification of other homes will be kept strictly confidential. Along with study results, the women will receive information about the types of products that may be sources of the EDCs. Women are urged to call Silent Spring Institute at 800-708-1942 for more information.

In commenting on the study which found 100 homes with contaminant levels over a federal health guideline, Silent Spring Institute Senior Scientist Ruthann Rudel, who directed the sampling effort said, "We are studying these chemicals because we don't know enough yet about their health effects. To date, we cannot clearly say whether exposure to these chemicals at these levels is harmful to human health. We do know, however, that if we reduce exposure, we can be more assured of avoiding any health impact."

The Cape Cod Breast Cancer and Environment Study began in 1994 in response to higher breast cancer incidence on Cape Cod. The household study was funded by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health and, since state breast cancer research funding was eliminated in 2002, by Hurricane Voices Breast Cancer Foundation. Silent Spring Institute is a non-profit research organization dedicated to studying the environment's effect on women's health, particularly on breast cancer.

For more information, copies of testing results or the study, or to arrange interviews, contact Karen Towne, Silent Spring Institute, 617-332-4288 x26 or [towne@silentspring.org](mailto:towne@silentspring.org).

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