



Statement Regarding the Balancing of Hazard and Exposure Risks through Policymaking

The important task of screening chemical substances for the potential to cause harm to the environment or human health includes, by necessity, assessment of both the hazards associated with each substance and the exposure that may result from its presence, use or disposal. All substances, including those commonly used, can be hazardous under certain conditions. For example, drinking eight glasses of water a day is beneficial, but in very large quantities (use and exposure) water can be a dangerous substance. Likewise beneficial drugs such as coumadin are used to prevent harmful blood clotting in patients. However, the same substance is also used, in much higher doses, as a rodenticide.

Both the hazards and use/exposure patterns of a substance must be carefully analyzed, understood, weighed and balanced when policy decisions about unacceptable risk are made. It is necessary to judge the acceptability of the presence of a substance, the quantities or concentrations of it, and the conditions under which the hazard might occur when used, released or disposed.

Risk assessment is the gathering and analysis of all of this information. It is a vital part of the public policy process. Sound risk management policy decisions will incorporate and balance the assessed risks against the benefits obtained and the costs relative to other policy choices.

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