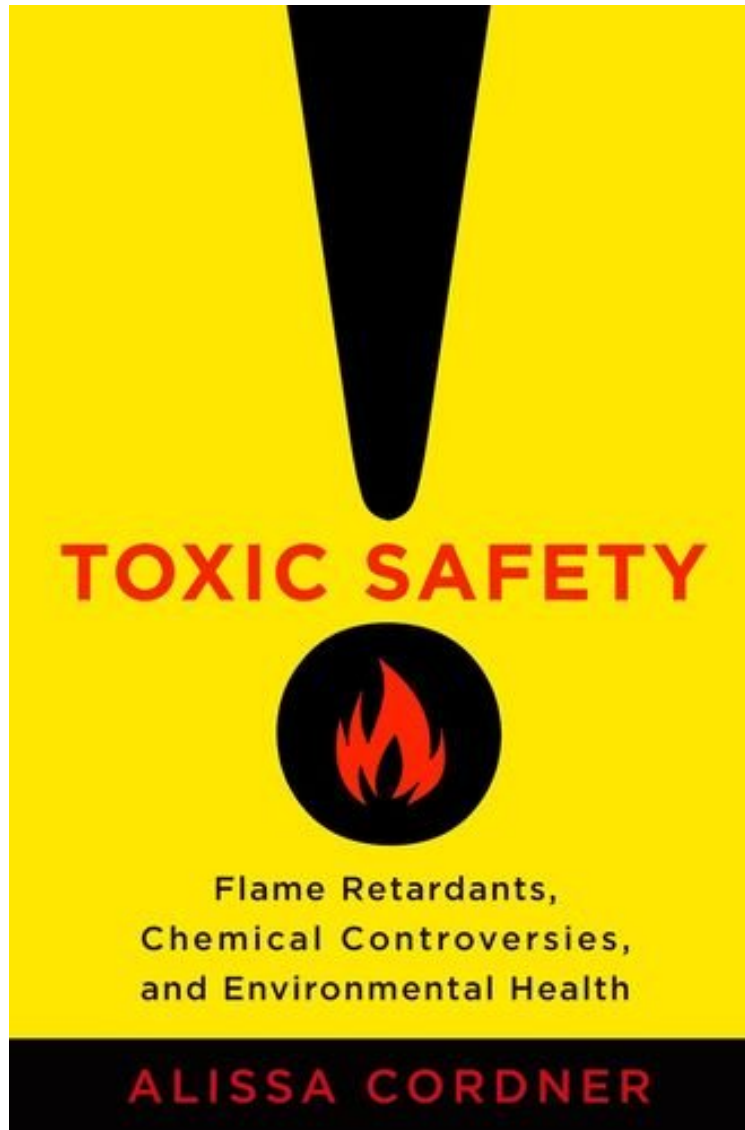


Toxic Safety: Flame Retardants, Chemical Controversies, and Environmental Health

Alissa Cordner

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Alissa Cordner : Toxic Safety: Flame Retardants, Chemical Controversies, and Environmental Health before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Toxic Safety: Flame

Retardants, Chemical Controversies, and Environmental Health:

Initially marketed as a life-saving advancement, flame retardants are now mired in controversy. Some argue that data show the chemicals are unsafe while others continue to support their use. The tactics of each side have far-reaching consequences for how we interpret new scientific discoveries. An experienced environmental sociologist, Alissa Cordner conducts more than a hundred interviews with activists, scientists, regulators, and industry professionals to isolate the social, scientific, economic, and political forces influencing environmental health policy today. Introducing "strategic science translation," she describes how stakeholders use scientific evidence to support nonscientific goals and construct "conceptual risk formulas" to shape risk assessment and the interpretation of empirical evidence. A revelatory text for public-health advocates, *Toxic Safety* demonstrates that while all parties interested in health issues use science to support their claims, they do not compete on a level playing field and even good intentions can have deleterious effects.

How could a class of chemicals as dangerous to health and limited in usefulness as flame retardants have become as widespread as they have? How could scientists, advocates, legislators, firefighters, and others mount an effective campaign to curb their use? *Toxic Safety* tells this story with great finesse, while setting the bar for research on chemical controversy. Cordner's notion of 'strategic science translation' and her elaboration of multiple approaches to risk will be standards for future environmental and public health scholars. (Phil Brown, author of *Toxic Exposures: Contested Illnesses and the Environmental Health Movement*) The flame retardant controversy serves as a fascinating case study of how scientific policies are made. *Toxic Safety* is a well-researched, well-organized, and well-written real-life example of how science contributes to policy. (Julie Herbstman, Columbia University) An important, well-documented, and well-told account. Recommended. (CHOICE) *Toxic Safety* makes an important contribution to questions about how we regulate environmental chemicals and how stakeholders shape this process. The book will be of interest to a range of readers, including environmental sociologists, public health advocates, and those interested in the politics of flame retardants and environmental health. It could usefully be assigned in advanced undergraduate courses and graduate seminars that address environmental politics. (Rachel Washburn *Medical Anthropology Quarterly*) About the Author Alissa Cordner is assistant professor of sociology at Whitman College and coauthor (with Gianpaolo Baiocchi, Elizabeth A. Bennett, Peter Klein, and Stephanie Savell) of *The Civic Imagination: Making a Difference in American Political Life* (2014).