



## Chemical and Occupational Safety and Health Principles

**The BlueGreen Alliance and its labor and environmental partners — the United Steelworkers (USW), Sierra Club, Communications Workers of America (CWA), Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), Service Employees International Union (SEIU), Laborers' International Union of North America (LIUNA), Utility Workers Union of America (UWUA), American Federation of Teachers (AFT), Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) and Sheet Metal Workers' International Association (SMWIA) — share a common vision: a new green economy with good jobs for all Americans. In that new economy, millions of Americans will be employed safely manufacturing, constructing, teaching and maintaining the solutions to the connected problems of global warming, unsustainable energy dependence and toxic chemicals. In the BlueGreen Alliance vision, innovation and investment in clean energy and green chemistry and engineering put American workers back to work making the components of a better world.**

To reach that 21st century vision, we need 21st century laws that promote the creation of comprehensive solutions to our nation's connected problems. The federal programs that were established more than 30 years ago to protect the health and safety of workers, communities and the environment need to be modernized to reflect new science, new economic realities and a transformed geo-political situation. Fundamentally, our laws need to be modernized to protect our health, the health of our children and the health of our planet — and so they create new economic opportunities that will help us solve the current jobs crisis. The BlueGreen Alliance and its partners will work for the passage of legislation on chemicals policy, chemical security and occupational safety and health that are based on the following principles:

### **1. REQUIRE FULL INFORMATION:**

Knowledge is power. Workers, the public and the marketplace should have full access to information about workplace injuries and accidents, the health and environmental hazards of chemicals and the way in which government makes decisions about our safety and health.

### **2. GIVE GOVERNMENT THE POWER TO PROTECT:**

Effective reform will give the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) the clear authority and the necessary resources to enforce existing law, establish and implement new rules and standards, and to take strong, corrective actions when those rules and standards are not met.

### **3. ACT ON THE WORST FIRST:**

The most dangerous workplaces and the most toxic chemicals should be targeted for immediate action. Saving lives and protecting health should be the top priority of all chemicals security, chemicals policy and worker health and safety legislation. The identification of cost-effective alternatives to hazardous products and practices is an essential component of this process.

#### 4. PROTECT EVERYONE'S SAFETY AND HEALTH:

Children, workers, pregnant women, public employees, people of color, indigenous people, low-income communities and neighborhoods near water treatment or chemicals plants are all entitled to the same strong safeguards. No vulnerable group or sub-population should have a less protective health and safety standard.

#### 5. PROMOTE PROBLEM SOLVING RATHER THAN PROBLEM SHIFTING:

New law should prioritize the use of green chemistry and engineering, and other green design strategies, that create inherently safer products and processes. The aim of legislation should be to solve, not shift problems. When the resolution of one problem does create another, that new problem should be directly addressed and resolved to the maximum extent possible. Just transition for displaced workers is one example of problem solving rather than problem shifting.

#### 6. INVOLVE WORKERS, COMMUNITIES AND THE PUBLIC:

The health and safety of the American people and the environment we share are improved by the full participation of workers in assuring the health and safety of their workplace. Enforcement of these laws will be helped by right to know provisions, whistleblower protections, ingredient disclosure, citizen petitions and suits and provisions that ensure that workers are part of all inspections and safety planning.

#### 7. ADAPT AND ADOPT AND RESPOND:

Safety and health law must be able to adapt to the most recent scientific findings, adopt new methodologies that more closely define harm or protect health, and respond to new problems.

#### 8. IMPROVE COORDINATION BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AGENCIES:

EPA, OSHA, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and other federal government agencies have overlapping responsibilities for protecting Americans' occupational and environmental health. New law should require collaboration between agencies to avoid regulatory redundancy or inconsistency. The ability of the states to enact stricter and more innovative chemical and occupational safety and health policies should be maintained and state/federal cooperation should be encouraged.

#### 9. INVEST IN A GREEN JOBS FUTURE AND SUPPORT THE TRANSITION TO THAT FUTURE:

Effective reform must include federal support for basic and applied research as well as incentives for the production of safer alternatives. These investments and incentives should be designed to provide U.S. companies and U.S. workers with the resources they need to grow a new economy in the United States that is both environmentally and economically sustainable.



2828 University Ave. SE, Suite 200  
Minneapolis, MN 55414  
612.466.4479

1133 15th Street NW, Suite 1075  
Washington, D.C. 20005  
202.548.6587