

# Meet Saskia

Saskia van Bergen and the Department of Ecology for Washington State ([www.ecology.wa.gov/GreenChem](http://www.ecology.wa.gov/GreenChem))



Saskia is a chemist who works for the Department of Ecology as a green chemistry scientist. She works to help people and organizations throughout Washington State incorporate the principles of green chemistry into

their work and play. To do this she collaborates with universities, companies and nonprofits. In addition to telling people about green chemistry, she has managed several projects that test for toxic chemicals in products that we use everyday.

Saskia has always been interested in science and the environment and when she first learned about green chemistry she realized that chemists could solve problems BEFORE they happened by creating safer products.

The mission of the Washington State Department of Ecology is to protect, preserve, and enhance Washington's environment for current and future generations. They do things ranging from cleaning up toxic spills to monitoring the health of the air, rivers, and estuaries. Another way is by working to reduce the amount of toxic chemicals used by helping people switch to safer products and create safer chemicals & materials using green chemistry principles. They increase awareness and adoption of green chemistry principles and safer alternatives through training sessions, the development of helpful tools, and technical assistance on challenges.

Some of their related work in this area includes:

- enforcing product laws developed by the legislature (such as the restriction of toxic metals in children's products),
- testing products and monitoring the environment for those toxic chemicals,
- developing and funding training sessions on safer alternatives and green chemistry for various audiences (such as for teachers, universities, and workers),
- working on purchasing contracts to buy safer products, and
- providing technical support to companies hoping to transition to safer materials and processes.