Review of Fall 2006 GETA Meeting

The topic for the Fall 2006 GETA meeting was "Green Chemistry: Coloring California Green". Green chemistry can be defined as the design of chemical products and processes to reduce and/or eliminate substances hazardous to human health and the environment. Green chemistry can have an even broader definition and include areas such as biotech processes and building materials. Richard Lam, a State toxicologist who is involved with the State Sustained Building Committee, gave a presentation on green buildings in California. He described the work that has been done to establish standards for building materials and design, and the Governor's Executive Order that gave the push for the State to require that these standards and designs be used for all new State buildings. Since the State is a major purchaser of materials and products such as carpet and computers (for offices, schools, prisons, etc.), the standards will, and have had, an impact on the formulation of products. For example, manufacturers have devised ways to lower the amount of formaldehyde emitted from particle board. The second presentation was given by Michael Wilson, an assistant research scientist and the lead author on a report commissioned by the California Senate Environmental Quality Committee to assess chemical policies and propose changes (http://coeh.berkeley.edu/greenchemistry1.htm). Mr. Wilson discussed the federal Toxic Substances Control Act and other regulations that impact the current production and use of chemicals. He described barriers to green chemistry (data, safety and technology gaps) and proposed broad policies to overcome these barriers. The final presentation was co-led by Andrew Salmon and Jim Collins, both toxicologists with the State office responsible for setting "safe" exposure levels for environmental chemicals. They presented information on alternatives to the traditionally used dry cleaning solvent perchloroethylene. For those of you who were unable to attend the meeting, you may link to pdf files of the presentations from this meeting on the GETA website.