

EPA reports on regulatory investigation of Formaldehyde

In 1984, EPA began a regulatory investigation of formaldehyde under TSCA. The investigation has since focused on assessing the risk associated with exposure to the formaldehyde in manufactured (mobile) and conventional homes. The Agency is evaluating the need for, and nature of, regulations affecting commercial manufacture and use of urea-formaldehyde pressed wood products. Wood products of this type include particleboard, hardwood plywood and medium density fiberboard. These pressed woods are used as construction materials for building most manufactured and some conventional homes, and for fabricating cabinets, shelving and furniture. They can and often do emit formaldehyde concentrations in homes. This is the Agency's fifth semi-annual report on the progress of that investigation.

Since issuing its last report, EPA staff has (1) finished compiling and evaluating all available health and exposure data concerned with formaldehyde, including the results of three recent epidemiologic studies; 2) reviewed the public comments received by EPA on risk evaluation issues; and 3) drafted a comprehensive risk assessment document. The summary chapter of that assessment—the risk characterization—contains the conclusion of the assessment, describes the strengths and weaknesses of the supporting data, and identifies major scientific uncertainties accompanying the assessment. The risk assessment document, intended to serve the health hazard evaluation needs of OTS and other EPA program offices concerned with formaldehyde, is presently undergoing final Agency review.

The Agency's formaldehyde workgroup, comprised of representatives from various offices within EPA, is presently reviewing all available information on the formaldehyde-pressed wood issue and exploring a range of regulatory options under TSCA. These options will necessarily consider ongoing regulatory activities within two other agencies that are also focused on the issue, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission. The options which emerge from the workgroup deliberations will be contained in a regulatory options paper that is being prepared to serve as a focal point for discussion at an upcoming EPA options selection meeting. The options paper will present several alternative courses for future Agency action.

Concern is dioxin and furan formation

EPA Now Wants Data On 30 Chemicals

On October 23, 1986, EPA issued a proposed rule (51 FR 37612) to require reporting on 18 chlorinated and brominated benzene chemicals. This proposed rule amends a December 19, 1985 proposed rule (50 FR 51974) which required reporting on 12 such compounds. The 1985 proposal also requires manufacturers of commercial organic substances to test certain substances for the presence of chlorinated and brominated dioxins and furans.

If the October 1986 amendment becomes final as it is now written, manufacturers and importers of 30 chemicals would be required under section 8(a) of TSCA to submit data on production volume, manufacturing process, reaction conditions, exposure, use and disposal of end products resulting from the use of any of the 30 chemicals. EPA needs these data on the precursor chemicals because these substances can, during further processing under certain reaction conditions, lead to formation of dioxins and furans, even though the precursor chemicals are not themselves contaminated.

That portion of the 1985 proposed rule that requires manufacturers and importers of 14 commercial organic chemicals to test these substances, under section 4 of TSCA, for the presence of chlorinated and brominated dioxins and furans remains unchanged by the latest amendment. The December 19, 1985 proposal (50 FR 51974) also called for such testing and reporting of 20 other organic chemicals not now commercially manufactured in the United States or currently being imported, if manufacture or importation resumes.

The 1985 proposed rule was in response to an October 22, 1984 citizens' petition filed under section 21 of TSCA. The petition requested, among other things, that EPA initiate a number of specific regulatory and information-gathering steps to control the generation of specific 2,3,7,8-substituted chlorinated and brominated isomers of dioxin and furans. EPA responded to the section 21 petition on January 30, 1985 (50 FR 4426). See page 11 of this Bulletin for explanations of TSCA sections 4, 8, and 21.

"Don't Blow It" We've Taped It

A new EPA videotape on controlling asbestos brake dust is available for purchase. "Don't Blow It" covers the potential health hazards from exposure to asbestos in brake dust and how to effectively control brake dust. The 15-minute tape is designed for use by brake and fleet garage mechanics and vocational schools. Auto dealers and unions also will find the program useful.

In 1/2" format the cost is \$24.60; in Beta I or II, \$18.35; in VHS \$17.50. Orders should be placed with Color Film Corp., Video Div., 770 Connecticut Ave., Norwalk, CN 06854, or by calling either (800) 882-1120 or (203) 866-2711. Prices include postage and handling charges. There is a 48-hour service with certified check or money order. Orders must be prepaid. Connecticut residents and corporations must add 7.5% state sales tax. A few copies of the videotape are available for very short loan periods. Call the TAO (202) 554-1404 for details.