

Formaldehyde Emission Standards for Composite Wood Products Final Rule

Questions and Answers – General Consumers

1. **What action is EPA taking today?**

EPA is finalizing a rule to help reduce harmful exposures to formaldehyde emitted into the air from certain composite wood products. This new rule will implement the formaldehyde emission standards and other provisions required under the Formaldehyde Standards for Composite Wood Products Act, which added Title VI to the Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA). The final rule also establishes a third-party certification program for laboratory testing and oversight of formaldehyde emissions from manufactured and/or imported composite wood products.

2. **What are composite wood products and what types are covered by the final rule?**

Composite wood products are wood products created by binding strands, particles, fibers, veneers, or boards of wood together with adhesives (i.e., glues). There are three composite wood products that are regulated under TSCA Title VI: hardwood plywood, medium-density fiberboard (includes thin-MDF), and particleboard. These composite wood products are commonly used in the manufacture of furniture, kitchen cabinets, flooring, picture frames and wooden children's toys, among other products.

3. **What is formaldehyde and how is it used in composite wood products?**

Formaldehyde is a colorless, flammable, strong-smelling chemical that is used in resins (i.e., glues) used in the manufacture of composite wood products (i.e., hardwood plywood, particleboard and medium-density fiberboard).

4. **What are the health effects of formaldehyde exposure?**

Formaldehyde exposure can have a negative effect on health, both in the short and long term. Formaldehyde can cause irritation of the skin, eyes, nose, and throat. High levels of exposure may cause some types of cancers.

5. **When do the rule requirements go into effect?**

The formaldehyde emission standards go into effect one year after the rule is finalized. This date then triggers additional requirements for manufacturers, importers, fabricators (e.g., furniture makers), distributors, retailers, third party certifiers (TPCs) and accreditation bodies (ABs). The ABs oversee and accredit TPCs and may begin to apply to EPA to become recognized under the EPA TSCA Title VI program 60 days after the rule is finalized. TPCs may apply to become recognized under the EPA TSCA Title VI program to certify composite wood products after their AB is recognized by EPA and the TPC is properly accredited by their AB as required by the EPA rule. One year after the EPA final rule is published, all regulated composite wood products must be certified as compliant with TSCA Title VI by an EPA-recognized TPC.

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6. Who is subject to the final rule requirements?

Those who sell, supply, offer for sale, manufacture or import composite wood products are subject to the final rule requirements. This includes manufacturers, importers, fabricators (e.g., furniture makers) distributors and retailers. Third party certifiers (TPCs) who certify that composite wood products are compliant with the EPA rule and accreditation bodies who accredit and oversee the TPCs are also affected by the rule.

7. What are the formaldehyde emissions standards for covered composite wood products?

The formaldehyde emissions standards vary by type of regulated product. In the table below, the product is aligned with its emissions standard in parts per million (ppm).

Product	Emission Standard
Hardwood Plywood – Veneer Core	0.05 ppm of formaldehyde
Hardwood Plywood – Composite Core	0.05 ppm of formaldehyde
Medium-Density Fiberboard	0.11 ppm of formaldehyde
Thin Medium-Density Fiberboard	0.13 ppm of formaldehyde
Particleboard	0.09 ppm of formaldehyde

8. How does this regulation differ from the CARB regulation?

The formaldehyde emission standards for composite wood products under the EPA final rule, and set by Congress, are identical to the California “Phase 2” formaldehyde emission standards. EPA worked to align the other requirements of the federal rule with the California requirements. However, there are a few differences. Unlike the California requirements, among other things, the EPA rule will: require records be kept for 3 years versus 2 years, require importers to provide import certification under TSCA 2 years after rule finalization, require manufacturers to disclose upon request formaldehyde testing results to their direct purchasers and require laminated products not exempted from the definition of hardwood plywood to meet the hardwood plywood formaldehyde emissions standard seven years after the final rule is issued.

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9. **Will compliant wood products be labeled?**

Yes. Composite wood products, and finished goods containing composite wood products, are required to be labeled as TSCA Title VI compliant by one year after the final rule is issued. The labels on finished goods must include the fabricator's (e.g. furniture maker's) name, the date the finished good was produced and a statement that the finished goods are TSCA Title VI compliant. Raw composite wood panels, that you can buy in a home improvement store, must include the panel producer's (i.e., manufacturer's) name, lot number, the assigned EPA-Recognized TSCA Title VI Third-Party Certifier number and a statement that the products are TSCA Title VI compliant.

10. **How does EPA ensure that composite wood products do not exceed the emission standards?**

EPA established a third-party certification program for laboratory testing and oversight of formaldehyde emissions from manufactured and/or imported regulated composite wood products. This helps to ensure only composite wood products compliant with the formaldehyde emission standards enter the supply chain.