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EPA / NPA “HOME STUDY” RESULTS ANNOUNCED; FINAL REPORT CITES LOW FORMALDEHYDE LEVELS

After more than eighteen months of planning and intensive testing, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has completed its Residential Indoor Air Formaldehyde Testing Program Pilot Study. The Final Report of the Study, issued by EPA on March 21, 1996, describes the results of a cooperative effort between the National Particleboard Association (NPA) and EPA to evaluate testing and operational procedures for assessing the impact of urea formaldehyde (UF) bonded wood products in newly constructed houses.

“This EPA-conducted Study demonstrates that formaldehyde levels in a newly-constructed conventional house were even lower than those predicted by popular indoor air computer models,” said Richard Margosian, Executive Vice President of the NPA. Under the Study, a conventionally-built, two story house was selected and carefully prepared for testing. Combinations of UF bonded wood products were then installed at different loading rates and regularly monitored for indoor formaldehyde concentrations. The formaldehyde emission characteristics of these products—which included particleboard underlayment, kitchen and bath cabinets, hardwood plywood wall paneling, and interior doors—were thoroughly tested prior to their installation.

“The Study is technically sound and the results are significant,” said Margosian. “It’s excellent news for the particleboard and MDF industry and those who use our products,” he added. “While the primary purpose of the Study was to address testing protocols, the results support what industry has been saying for years: formaldehyde emission levels from composite wood products are a fraction of what they were 20 years ago, and when these products are used in housing, the resulting formaldehyde levels are extremely low.”

Specifically, the Pilot Study found:

- ◆ Indoor concentrations of formaldehyde from all loading combinations of UF bonded wood products substantially below EPA’s 0.1 parts per million (ppm) “level of concern”; and
- ◆ Overall home concentrations thirty days after installation below 0.05 ppm in even the highest loading scenario.

The Pilot Study was funded through a Cooperative Research and Development Agreement (CIRCA) between NPA and EPA. Other industry members supporting the Study included U.S. and Canadian producers of particleboard and MDF, UF resin manufacturers, the Hardwood Plywood and Veneer Association, the Kitchen Cabinet Manufacturers Association, and the Manufactured Housing Institute. EPA conducted the Pilot Study through independent contractors, including Battelle, Versar, Inc and GEOMET Technologies, Inc. Industry contributed in excess of \$460,000 to the Pilot Study’s overall cost, and provided the UF bonded construction materials for the house.

NPA was founded in 1965 and represents 21 U.S. companies and the Canadian Particleboard Association, which together produce nearly 90% of North America’s particleboard and MDF. Most of NPA’s programs are dedicated to technical research, development of industry standards, and production of informational publications and other materials. Copies of the Final Report are available from the EPA or NPA.