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Industry Breathing Easier Over EPA's Formaldehyde Rule

By Rich Christianson

The head of the Composite Panel Association (CPA) gave a thumb's up to the prepublication release of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's long-awaited Formaldehyde Emissions Standards for Composite Wood Products.

Jackson Morrill, president of the CPA, was relieved to note that the new standard contains no major surprises. It is by-and-large modeled on the rules created by the California Air Resource Board (CARB). The CARB Rules have guided manufacturers of particleboard, MDF and hardwood plywood since 2007 to produce panels with lower emissions of urea formaldehyde or switch to no-added urea formaldehyde (NAUF) resin alternatives to comply.

"We applaud EPA for finalizing this important regulation, taking the final step to ensure California's formaldehyde emission standards are enforced nationally," Morrill said. "It marks the culmination of a remarkable effort that started with a diverse group of environmental, labor union and industry stakeholders who came together to work with Congress to enact, at the national level, the world's most stringent standard for formaldehyde emissions for composite wood."

The CPA is steward of the Federal Wood Industry Coalition (FWIC) of which the Wood Machinery Manufacturers of America is a member. FWIC members have reviewed the new EPA standard and compiled a document of suggested tweaks to its wording that would add clarity and consistency to the final document to be published in the Federal Register.

The EPA rule was finalized more than two years beyond the July 2013 deadline mandated by Congress in passing the Formaldehyde Standards for Toxic Wood Products Act in 2010. It makes the heart of the CARB rules the law of the land, including emission limits, third party testing and certification requirements, and labeling. Moving forward, wood composite panels covered by the EPA rule will be labeled "TSCA Title VI

Compliant.”

The industry segment possibly most impacted by the EPA rule is comprised of fabricators of wood veneered components. These “laminators” will have to make sure that the combination of substrate and glue they use to adhere face veneers to a panel comply with emission standards.

The standard, if enforced, also will serve to level the playing field by keeping non-compliant composite panels and products from being imported into the United States. Morrill pointed to the CBS 60 Minutes report that exposed Lumber Liquidators’ importation of non-compliant laminate flooring from China as a prime example. *“The CBS 60 Minutes exposé on Lumber Liquidators’ Chinese-made laminate flooring brings to light the critical importance of strong enforcement,”* Morrill said. *“CPA members are confident that they are already meeting this new regulation’s requirements because they have invested significant time and resources over the past eight years to do so. The effectiveness of this stewardship has been well-documented, including in the 60 Minutes episode, where the investigation found all U.S.-sourced laminate flooring passed CBS’s independent testing.”*

Morrill reserved praise for congressmen who took a leadership role on pushing for the EPA rule. *“This outcome would not have been possible without the strong bipartisan leadership from the lead sponsors of the Formaldehyde Emission Standards for Composite Wood Products Act, Senators Mike Crapo (R-ID) and Amy Klobuchar (D-MN) and Congresswoman Doris Matsui (D-CA). They not only shepherded this bill into law, but they remained engaged with EPA to ensure the Agency lived up to its commitment to publish these implementing regulations in line with the Act.”*

Finalization of the EPA rule puts to bed another of the WMMA Public Policy Committee’s priority issues.

[Learn more about the EPA Wood Composite Formaldehyde Rule.](#)

Roundup: News, Notes & More

NAM Lays Out Fall Election Roadmap

“Competing to Win: Manufacturers’ Agenda for Economic Growth and American Exceptionalism” summarizes the National Association of Manufacturers’ policy priorities for strengthening U.S. manufacturing. NAM views the agenda “as an asset to any candidate or officeholder working to chart a new way forward.”

The Competing to Win agenda is divided into 10 broad categories:

- Tax, including modernizing the 1986 tax code;
- Trade, including support for the Trans Pacific Partnership;
- Energy, including capitalizing on all forms of energy;
- Environment, including striking a balance between government regulations and economic feasibility;
- Transportation & Infrastructure, including addressing the nation’s “outdated” roadways;
- Labor, including updating labor laws and workplace regulations that “do not reflect the changing dynamics of modern manufacturing;”
- Immigration, including comprehensive reforms that will strengthen manufacturing;
- Workforce, including focusing on education and training programs to close the skills gap;
- Health Care, including addressing the Affordable Care Act, which “continues to impact manufacturers by adding costs and making critical health care services and treatments even more expensive for employees of manufacturers.”
- Research, Innovation & Technology, including creating an environment where U.S. manufactures can continue to innovate new technologies; and
- Regulatory & Legal Reform, including reforms which will remove “regulatory structures that have become barriers to economic growth, hindering innovation and slowing productivity.”

[Read more...](#)

Super Thin Saws Hosts Congressman; So Can You



*Photo Caption: From left Rob Bisbee, Dave Strom, Rep. Peter Welch and John Schultz.
(Photo provided by the Office of Congressman Peter Welch)*

Manufacturing Day came early at Super Thin Saws (STS). The Waterbury, VT, WMMA member company played host to Rep. Peter Welch (D-VT). STS President John Schultz led Welch on a tour of the company's saw blade manufacturing operations. They also discussed the congressman's support for [Perkins Career and Technical Education Act reauthorization](#) and [Manufacturing Reinvestment Account](#) legislation. Perkins and the MRA are both priority issues of the WMMA Public Policy Committee.

Schultz noted that the governor and lieutenant governor of Vermont also are among past visitors to STS.

"You never know when it will prove useful to have as close a relation as possible to your representatives," Schultz said. "I think the more manufacturing a politician is exposed to, the more friendly or at least less hostile he'll be to it."

The WMMA Public Policy Committee encourages WMMA members to seize Manufacturing Day, Oct. 7, as an opportunity to host tours of your facility to congressmen, state and local elected officials, and other invested members of your community. It's a day for manufacturers of all sizes and stripes to open their doors and address the common misperceptions about manufacturing and showcase career opportunities. Learn more at www.mfgday.com.

Editor's Note: If your company observes Manufacturing Day, be sure to take lots of photos and send at least one my way via richsonmediapro@gmail.com, for use in a follow-up article.

USITC Broadens Probe of Countertop Material Maker's Patent Complaints



For the second time in three months, the U.S. International Trade Commission (USITC) voted to investigate quartz slabs, a popular countertop material, imported by companies that the Cambria Company of Belle Plaine, MN, claims violates its patents.

The USITC recently voted to launch a probe of products imported by five U.S. companies, two Chinese companies and a Vietnamese company. In May, the USITC voted to investigate quartz products imported by two firms, including Wilsonart.

Cambria's complaint alleges that the companies violated section 337 of the Tariff Act of 1930 and infringed on its patents. The company is requesting a general exclusion order or at least a cease and desist order to prevent the imported products from entering the country.

The USITC's vote directs the appointment of an administrative law judge to hold an evidentiary hearing and make an initial determination as to whether there is a violation of section 337. If so, the USITC would review the case and make a final determination in the investigation at the earliest practicable time. [Read more...](#)

Chinese Furniture Makers Open Plants in Vietnam to Skirt U.S. Duties

VN Express reports that one-third of all foreign wood furniture manufacturers operating in Vietnam are owned by Chinese concerns. Many of these companies moved their operations from the mainland to Vietnam to avoid paying antidumping duties on wood bedroom furniture exported to the United States. Vietnam exported about \$7.6 billion in wood products last year. [Read more...](#)

Note: Just as I was giving this month's Washington Report a final proof, I saw that Tom Russell of Furniture Today posted a blog based on the VN Express Story. I think, the headline of Russell's op-ed sums it up well, "Is Vietnam next in line for antidumping duties?" [Read more...](#)

DOL Seeks Entries for Noise Abatement Contest

The Department of Labor is accepting entries through Sept. 30 for ideas and technological solutions for protecting workers from noise exposure and related hearing loss. The "Hear and Now – Noise Safety Challenge" seeks to inspire creative ideas and raise business awareness of the market for workplace safety innovation. DOL says 22 million workers are at risk of losing their hearing from workplace noise hazards. More information and a link to submit ideas can be found at <https://www.dol.gov/featured/hearing>.

Owner of Shuttered BC Sawmill Appeals Safety Fines

Three safety citations totaling more than \$28,000 are being contested by the owner of Cambria Cedar Products, a company that has ceased operations since a December 2015 inspection by WorkSafeBC, an OSHA-like agency for British Columbia, Canada. According to the Eagle Valley News, the company was cited for hazardous accumulations of combustible dust, unguarded equipment and obstructing the WorkSafeBC inspection. Mill owner Dennis McKinney said he expects to win his appeal. "As the (Workers' Compensation Appeal Tribunal) already ruled, I was right 100 per cent and they were wrong 100 per cent," said McKinney. "There's no fire hazard and no explosion hazard with wet hemlock sawdust which we've been running for two years here. It's all nonsense." [Read more...](#)

Cited & Fined

Prop N Spoon, a manufacturer of Railway, NJ, was fined \$47,000 by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) for 20 workplace violations including exposing workers to chemical hazards, combustible dust hazards and lack of safety guards on machines. The inspection was conducted as part of the agency's National Emphasis Program for Combustible Dust. [Read more...](#)

Liqui-Box Corp. of Ashland, OH, was cited for several violations including failing to report an employee's injury requiring hospitalization within 24 hours as required by the [OSHA's new workplace illness and injury recording and reporting rule](#). The workers sustained a partial amputation of this thumb while operating a plastic blow molding press. Expect to see more manufacturers cited for violating OSHA's injury reporting rules moving forward. [Read more...](#)



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