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Going Green Is Easy, the Wood Industry Moving Forward

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Common Sense "Green"

There are three main issues in the forest products arena regarding "Going Green": Air Quality, Sustainable Forests, and Legally Harvested Forest Products. Ask any normal person with common sense and they will tell you, "of course I want to improve the quality of air in my house or office and be sure I don't harm the environment or break any laws." The parallel concern for all of us is; "what is the cost in relation to the return on investment to do the right thing for our family and the environment?" How do we verify we are getting what is expected from our choices of products?

LEED & FSC® Jumpstart "Green"

LEED and FSC® are the most recognizable and influential organizations encouraging third party certification of wood products used in the manufacturer of all types of cabinetry. Credit is given to these two organizations for creating the public momentum demanding the wood product industry do a better job of providing products that are safer and insure sustainability of the world's forests. Both organizations encourage voluntary compliance to use wood products that improve air quality and protect our forests.

Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design (LEED) is a third party organization developed by the U.S. Green Building Council. In June of 2001, the first LEED Rating System was released allowing third-party verification that a building was designed and built using strategies aimed at improving performance across all the metrics that matter most: energy savings, water efficiency, CO_2 emissions reduction, **improved indoor environmental quality, and stewardship of resources** and sensitivity to their impacts.

The Forest Stewardship Council™ (FSC®) is devoted to encouraging the responsible management of the world's forests. FSC® sets high standards that ensure forestry is practiced in an environmentally responsible, socially beneficial, and economically viable way.

CARB Legislates Ultra Low Formaldehyde Levels for All Wood Panels

The **California Air Resources Board** (CARB) created legislation called the "Airborne Toxic Control Measure (ATCM) to Reduce Formaldehyde Emissions from Composite Wood Products". Starting January 1, 2009, California began regulating formaldehyde emissions from composite wood products (particleboard, MDF, and hardwood plywood) sold in the state or used to make finished goods offered for sale in the state. All products containing composite wood products must comply with the new regulation. Formaldehyde is normally present at low levels, usually less than 0.03 ppm, in both outdoor and indoor air. The CARB regulation limits formaldehyde emissions of hardwood plywood to .05 ppm (1/20th of one part in one million).

US Congress Legislates CARB Rule Nationwide

The US Congress has approved **legislation** (S1660) which President Obama signed into law that limits the allowable emissions of formaldehyde from specific composite wood products, hardwood plywood, particleboard and medium-density fiberboard sold in the United States. The Formaldehyde Standards for Composite Woods Products Act amends the 1976 Toxic Substances Control Act by requiring the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to implement formaldehyde emission standards originally established by the California Air Resources Board (CARB) by 2013.

The new federal law restricts formaldehyde emissions from composite wood products sold, supplied, or manufactured in the U.S., including those imported from foreign countries.

Every U.S. and some foreign manufacturers of industrial panel products including: particle board, MDF and hardwood plywood have already modified their products to meet these very strict standards. There is virtually no measurable difference in emission levels of CARB certified hardwood plywood and normal levels in the air we breathe.

Congress Resolves US Hardwoods Are Sustainable

Recently both the United States Senate **(S. Res. 411)** and the House of Representatives **(H. Res. 1477)** unanimously passed a resolution, "Recognizing the importance and sustainability of the United States hardwoods industry and urging that United States hardwoods and the products derived from United States hardwoods be given full consideration in any program directed at constructing environmentally preferable commercial, public, or private buildings." The fact that Congress has recognized our homeland hardwood forests as sustainable supports the sentiment there are other third party certification organizations that also provide meaningful contribution to the North American wood basket. The **Sustainable Forest Initiative** (SFI) provides third party certification for vastly larger volumes of hardwood lumber. SFI certified lumber is very plentiful.

The Common Sense Conclusion

All industrial wood panel products manufactured in the United States, and some foreign products, are third party certified and documented to be CARB compliant for formaldehyde emissions. Common sense analysis demonstrates there is no measurable difference between CARB compliant panels and NAUF panels. (See **Timber Products Point of View**)

In 2008, the US forest Service reported that the volume of American hardwoods is 90 percent larger than it was just 50 years ago and nearly twice as much hardwood grows as is harvested every year. When managed responsibly hardwood forests are at the least carbon neutral. American hardwoods are abundant and self-regenerating and for centuries have been providing beauty, warmth and functional value for floors, furniture, mouldings, millwork and cabinetry. American hardwoods are the very definition of sustainability.