



October 20, 2014

Dr. Meredith Williams  
Deputy Director  
Department of Toxic Substances Control  
Headquarters - 1001 I Street  
P.O. Box 806  
Sacramento, CA 95812-0806

**RE: Safer Consumer Products Draft Priority Product Work Plan**

Dear Dr. Williams:

The American Chemistry Council's Formaldehyde Panel (the Panel) is pleased to submit some initial information on formaldehyde and the uses identified in the proposed Safer Consumer Products Draft Priority Product Work Plan. The Panel represents US producers, suppliers and users of formaldehyde and formaldehyde products. We appreciate the opportunity to comment at this early stage in the development of the Work Plan, and stand ready to provide the Department with additional information as it moves forward with finalizing the Work Plan.

**A. Formaldehyde is naturally occurring, is quickly metabolized in the body and breaks down rapidly in the environment.**

Formaldehyde is naturally occurring and can be found in every living system – from plants to animals – all of which produce formaldehyde as a normal part of metabolism. In fact, formaldehyde is present in many natural foods that healthy adults and children consume as part of a well-balanced diet, including for example apples, bananas, grapes, pears, and plums. Formaldehyde metabolizes quickly in the body; it breaks down rapidly, is not persistent and does not accumulate in the environment. Inhalation of formaldehyde at levels to which most people are normally exposed does not alter the formaldehyde levels naturally present in the body. Moreover, the World Health Organization (WHO), among others, has concluded that there is no scientific evidence that children are more or less susceptible to formaldehyde exposures than adults.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See, e.g., World Health Organization (WHO). (2010). WHO Guidelines for Indoor Air Quality: Selected Pollutants, at 116. Available at [http://www.euro.who.int/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0009/128169/e94535.pdf](http://www.euro.who.int/_data/assets/pdf_file/0009/128169/e94535.pdf).



**B. Formaldehyde is well-studied and has defined threshold levels for health effects that are above reported levels for consumer products, such as cosmetics and clothing.**

Formaldehyde is also one of the most extensively studied chemicals in use today. There are literally hundreds of studies that have been published on metabolism, toxicity and effects in animals and humans. Many widely-respected scientific organizations, including the WHO, have taken the position that concentrations below scientifically-developed threshold levels for sensory irritation are unlikely to result in health effects. These threshold levels are much higher than what is typically found in indoor air or from consumer products. For example, reported concentrations for products covered under Washington State's Children's Safe Products Act, which included clothing and cosmetics, fall at or below even 100 ppm, or 0.1 g/l.<sup>2</sup> In a recently published study, Washington State's Department of Ecology measured VOCs and formaldehyde emissions from children's products, including cosmetics and apparel, and concluded that "[o]verall, the levels of formaldehyde in the products tested were low."<sup>3</sup>

**C. Formaldehyde has been thoroughly reviewed at the federal level and is already sufficiently regulated in the products listed in the draft Work Plan.**

Taking for example textiles and apparel, the formaldehyde chemistry used in dyeing and finishing has been extensively studied by the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) under the Federal Hazardous Substances Act (15 U.S. Code 1261-1278). These studies, conducted at Oak Ridge National Laboratory and other locations, determined that formaldehyde content in textiles does not pose acute or chronic health problems for consumers. Based on this research and other work, CPSC has decided that no regulatory standard was necessary for formaldehyde in textiles and apparel.<sup>4</sup>

The cosmetics industry has worked with the federal government to develop a national scientific organization, known as the Cosmetic Ingredient Review (CIR), which is sanctioned by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to review and assess the safety of ingredients used in cosmetics. Based on its reviews, the CIR classifies formaldehyde in beauty products as 'safe' as long as the percentage of free formaldehyde is 0.2 percent or less and not aerosolized. Formaldehyde was recently reviewed by the CIR and their current assessment is up to date.<sup>5</sup> We believe that CIR's scientific conclusions should inform any effort to assess the safety of personal care products that might be addressed in the draft Work Plan. Furthermore, recent data show that

<sup>2</sup> Data are available at <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/swfa/cspa/>.

<sup>3</sup> See pg. 11, available at: <https://fortress.wa.gov/ecy/publications/SummaryPages/1404015.html>.

<sup>4</sup> See, e.g., U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO). (2010). Formaldehyde in Textiles (GAO-10-875), at 11. Available at <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d10875.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> See <http://www.cir-safety.org/ingredient/formaldehyde>.



inhalation of formaldehyde from the use of personal care products poses no risk to human health.<sup>6</sup>

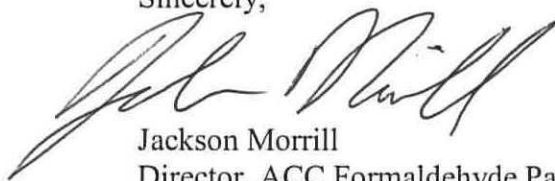
While we have included examples above of products that would appear to fall under the draft Work Plan, it is important to note that the federal government comprehensively regulates formaldehyde use in a number of consumer products. For example, the federal government, following Congressional legislation, is currently finalizing a regulation that would nationalize emission limits set under California's airborne toxics control measure to control formaldehyde emissions from composite wood products (CARB ATCM).<sup>7</sup> California's emission limits are widely-recognized as the most stringent in the world today. Through many years of voluntary stewardship efforts and as a result of the California regulation, formaldehyde resin producers and panel manufacturers are now capable of making products that emit at, or near, naturally occurring background levels from wood itself.

Formaldehyde-containing composite wood panels and finished goods incorporating those panels are aggressively and comprehensively regulated today. The purpose of both the CARB ATCM and the pending EPA regulation is to reduce formaldehyde exposure, which is identical to the statutory and regulatory purpose of the Safer Consumer Products program. The ACC Formaldehyde Panel therefore fully endorses the comments provided by the Wood Industries Coalition, including the request that DTSC not include in the final Work Plan formaldehyde-based composite wood panels and finished goods incorporating such panels.

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Given the low formaldehyde content and exposures associated with the products discussed above and the abundance of federal and state regulatory oversight, the product categories identified in the proposal that are associated with formaldehyde do not warrant further scrutiny or regulatory investigation. There is no evident public health concern associated with these products and their use of formaldehyde. We hope you will consider this information as you begin to identify the next groups of priority products. We stand ready to answer any additional questions you may have going forward.

Sincerely,



Jackson Morrill  
Director, ACC Formaldehyde Panel

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<sup>6</sup> Lefebvre, et al. (2012). "Consumer inhalation exposure to formaldehyde from the use of personal care products." Regulatory Toxicology and Pharmacology, 63: 171-76.

<sup>7</sup> See <http://www.epa.gov/opptintr/chemtest/formaldehyde/>.

