

FORMALDEHYDE TIMELINE

FROM FEMA

6-15-07

March 16, 2006

FEMA was informed of the initial applicant complaint by the Mississippi news media. FEMA immediately began to address additional applicant concerns on a case-by-case basis in the Gulf Coast.

FEMA implemented a practice of investigating complaints about formaldehyde levels. This investigation included sending a housing staff employee to visit with the occupants of the units and discuss ventilation of the units. If the unit had an obvious formaldehyde odor or the occupants were experiencing physical discomfort while in the unit, FEMA offered to replace the unit with an older unit that had reduced levels of formaldehyde emissions.

Residents in MS and LA were informed that they could contact the maintenance call centers if they had concerns about formaldehyde levels in their travel trailers. Call center numbers are still active –

Louisiana – (888) 294-2822

Mississippi – (866) 877-6075

March 28-29, 2006

FEMA Office of Occupational Safety and Health conducted formaldehyde air sampling tests of travel trailers at the Purvis, MS staging area. This report is posted on FEMA's website.

<http://www.fema.gov/media/index.shtm>

May 2006

Sierra Club issued a report calling attention to what it claimed were *dangerous levels* of formaldehyde in FEMA trailers.

May 12, 2006

Hilliard et al. v. United States of America et al., Case No. 2:06-cv-02576-MVL-KWR is filed in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Louisiana.

Hilliard alleges that FEMA-provided trailers in the Gulf Coast have high concentrations of formaldehyde that cause a clear and present danger to the health and well-being of the people who live in the trailers.

July, 2006

FEMA distributed a brochure to occupants of manufactured housing units across the Gulf Coast informing them of the risks associated with exposure. Actions to reduce formaldehyde levels were also recommended.

August 8, 2006

FEMA issued a press release on the plan to test methods to reduce formaldehyde in travel trailers.

<http://www.fema.gov/news/newsrelease.fema?id=28663>

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FORMALDEHYDE TIMELINE

September 12, 2006

FEMA modified an Interagency Agreement with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to conduct formaldehyde testing in travel trailer units.

September 18, 2006

The EPA began testing to measure the effectiveness of actions taken by FEMA to reduce formaldehyde levels (such as use of ventilation, air conditioning, and vent fans). Testing occurred at a Baton Rouge staging area and lasted for two weeks.

The EPA gathered baseline data on two groups of the 96 new, unused units, which that had been closed up for approximately six weeks.

Only previously unoccupied trailers were tested in order to eliminate any effects from human activities that might cause formaldehyde levels to rise. Samples were taken at different times of the day; ambient outdoor samples also were taken concurrent with the collection of the samples in the trailers. Ambient temperature and relative humidity data was collected as well for each ambient sample.

October 7, 2006

EPA concluded the testing.

October, 2006

FEMA Office of Safety conducted formaldehyde air sampling tests of travel Trailers at the Purvis, MS staging area. This report is posted on FEMA's website. <http://www.fema.gov/media/index.shtm>

November 17, 2006

EPA provided the data gathered during the sampling phase to FEMA for further analysis.

November 18, 2006

FEMA forwarded the data to the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Register (ATSDR) in Atlanta, Ga., which is associated with the Centers for Disease Control (CDC).

February 1, 2007

CDC/ATSDR provides FEMA with analysis of EPA Sampling. This report is posted on FEMA's website.

<http://www.fema.gov/media/index.shtm>

February 22, 2007

FEMA issued a press release with updated information on FEMA's plan to analyze the data provided by EPA to determine the impact of the ventilation and climate control measures on formaldehyde levels.

http://www.fema.gov/media/fact_sheets/trailers_update.shtm

FORMALDEHYDE TIMELINE

March 2007

FEMA initiates internal review of processes, training and documentation relating to formaldehyde in travel trailers.

March 2, 2007

Judge Lemmon granted FEMA's motion to dismiss in the *Hillard* formaldehyde litigation.

March 28, 2007

FEMA issued a statement on its investigation of the data provided by EPA.
<http://www.fema.gov/media/archives/2007/032807.shtm>

April 12, 2007

FEMA staff briefed House Government Reform Committee staffers on formaldehyde levels in FEMA-provided trailers.

May 4, 2007

FEMA issues press statement about the ATSDR analysis of EPA sampling.
<http://www.fema.gov/news/newsrelease.fema?id=36010>

May 18, 2007

Oldenburg et al. v. United States of America et al., Docket # 07-2961 filed in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Louisiana. *Oldenburg* is a class action lawsuit against the federal government as well as private contractors alleging negligence in providing housing units with high levels of formaldehyde emissions.

June 4, 2007

FEMA issues press release on "FEMA actions to minimize formaldehyde in travel trailers." <http://www.fema.gov/news/newsrelease.fema?id=36730>

Currently

FEMA is updating purchase specifications to include a requirement for low emission materials.

FEMA is preparing training for FEMA housing staff including staging areas, field staff and contractors to be aware of the formaldehyde issue, effective ventilation methods and proper response to formaldehyde complaints.

FEMA is engaging with the medical community and is developing new procedures for responding to occupant complaints regarding formaldehyde.

FEMA is working with the DHS Office of Health Affairs, and other federal agencies to ensure that FEMA is taking every possible step in protecting disaster victims from potential health and safety risks from formaldehyde exposure in travel trailers.