

# Formaldehyde Emission Standards for Composite Wood Products

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## Formaldehyde Emission Standards for Composite Wood Products

### Basic Information

On this page:

## Rule Summary

On December 12, 2016, EPA published in the Federal Register a final rule to reduce exposure to formaldehyde emissions from certain wood products produced domestically or imported into the United States. EPA worked with the California Air Resources Board (CARB) to help ensure the final national rule was consistent with California's requirements for similar composite wood products.

- [Read the final rule in the Federal Register](#)[Exit](#) [Exit](#) [EPA website](#).
- [View the press release announcing the final rule](#).
- [Read the Federal Register notice](#)[Exit](#) [Exit](#) [EPA website](#) delaying the effective date from March 21, 2017 to May 22, 2017.

The Formaldehyde Standards for Composite Wood Products Act of 2010 established emission standards for formaldehyde from composite wood products and directed EPA to finalize a rule on implementing and enforcing a number of provisions covering composite wood products.

As of June 1, 2018, and until March 22, 2019, composite wood products sold, supplied, offered for sale, manufactured, or imported in the United States were required to be labeled as CARB ATCM Phase II or TSCA Title VI compliant. After March 22, 2019, composite wood products must be labeled as TSCA Title VI compliant. These products include: hardwood plywood, medium-density fiberboard, and particleboard, as well as household and other finished goods containing these products.

By including provisions for laminated products, product-testing requirements, labeling, recordkeeping, and import certification, the final rule ensures that hardwood plywood, medium-density fiberboard, and particleboard products sold, supplied, offered for sale, imported to, or manufactured in the United States are in compliance with the emission standards.

The final rule also established a third-party certification program for laboratory testing and oversight of formaldehyde emissions from manufactured and/or imported composite wood products.

## Rule Amendments

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### Product Labeling Amendment

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On July 11, 2017, EPA published a direct final rule to remove a provision in the formaldehyde final rule that prohibited early labeling of compliant products. The Agency received no adverse comments on the direct final rule or proposed rule; therefore, it became effective on August 25, 2017.

- [Read the Federal Register Notice announcing the direct final rule](#)~~Exit~~ [EPA website](#).
- [View public comments on this action](#)~~Exit~~ [EPA website](#).

Removal of the prohibition on early labeling allows regulated entities to voluntarily label compliant products as soon as compliance can be achieved.

### Compliance Date Amendment

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On March 13, 2018, the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California issued an order addressing the litigation over the December 12, 2018 compliance date for the formaldehyde standards for composite wood products. [Read the Federal Register notice on the court order](#)~~Exit~~ [EPA website](#).

Following that court order and joint stipulation document, the relevant compliance dates are as follows:

- By June 1, 2018, regulated composite wood panels and finished products containing such composite wood panels that are manufactured (in the United States) or imported (into the United States) must be certified as compliant with either the TSCA Title VI or the California Air Resources Board (CARB) Airborne Toxic Control Measures (ATCM) Phase II emission standards, which are set at identical levels, [by a third-party certifier \(TPC\) approved by CARB and recognized by EPA](#). Previously, these products were required to be TSCA Title VI compliant by December 12, 2018.
- Until March 22, 2019, regulated products certified as compliant with the CARB ATCM Phase II emission standards must be labeled as compliant with either the TSCA Title VI or the CARB ATCM Phase II emission standards. Regulated products manufactured in or imported into the United States after March 22, 2019 may not rely on the CARB reciprocity of 40 CFR 770.15(e) and must be certified and labeled as TSCA Title VI compliant by an EPA TSCA Title VI TPC with all of the required accreditations.

- After March 22, 2019, CARB-approved TPCs must comply with additional accreditation requirements in order to remain recognized as an EPA TSCA Title VI TPC and to continue certifying products as TSCA Title VI compliant.

The following dates from [the September 25, 2017 compliance date extension final rule](#)[Exit](#) [Exit EPA website](#) remain in effect:

- Import certification provisions to March 22, 2019; it was previously December 12, 2018.
- Laminated product producer provisions to March 22, 2024; it was previously December 12, 2023.
- Conclusion of the transition period for CARB TPCs to March 22, 2019; it was previously December 12, 2018.

[Read the Federal Register notice on the court order](#)[Exit](#) [Exit EPA website](#).

## **Technical Issues Rulemaking**

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On August 21, 2019, EPA published a final rule that provides technical amendments to the December 12, 2016 formaldehyde rule. The amendments will further align EPA's TSCA Title VI regulation with the California Air Resource Board's Airborne Toxic Control Measure to reduce formaldehyde emissions from composite wood and provide clarity on certain rule provisions.

EPA is addressing the following issues in the final rule:

- Removing annual correlations between the Third-Party Certifier's (TPC's) chamber and the mill quality control chamber;
- Allowing equivalence on like-size or similar model chambers at TPC lab and mill;
- Averaging of emission test results from quarterly testing;
- Establishing testing emission ranges;
- Allowing for equivalence only if mill uses a TPC to conduct all testing;
- Updating correlational coefficients and "r" value alternatives;
- Updating the notification of an exceedance of quality control limit;
- Updating NAF and ULEF exemption testing requirements;
- Updating the ISO 17025-2017 and 17011-2017 voluntary consensus standards;
- Updating text in the non-complying lot provisions;
- Clarifying that labels on compliant products are required at point of entry in the United States; and
- Clarifying the June 1, 2018 manufactured-by date following a court ruling in 2017.

[Read the technical issues final rule Federal Register notice](#)[Exit](#) [Exit EPA website](#).

## **Amendments to Voluntary Consensus Standards and other Updates**

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On March 29, 2022, EPA opened a public comment period on proposed updates to the Formaldehyde Emission Standards for Composite Wood Products rule under TSCA.

This proposed rulemaking:

- Provides updates to voluntary consensus standards to reflect the current editions that are in-use by regulated entities and industry stakeholders. These updates are needed to ensure continued consistency with the standards adopted and used by industry.
- Allows for remote inspections in the event of unsafe conditions that would prevent a third-party certifier (TPC) from traveling in-person to the area. During the COVID-19 public health emergency, EPA provided temporary flexibility to allow TPCs to conduct remote inspections to satisfy the requirements of the rule. EPA is proposing to make this flexibility permanent and allow TPCs to conduct the required initial on-site inspection or quarterly inspections and sample collections remotely when in person, on-site inspections are temporarily impossible because of unsafe conditions.
- Includes certain technical corrections and updates to create additional flexibilities for the third-party certification process, as well as clarifying language as it relates to the production of wood products. These corrections will better align EPA's rule with the California Air Resources Board (CARB), allowing the two programs to work in tandem with one another in order to create an effective and efficient formaldehyde emissions regulatory system.

EPA accepted public comments on the proposed rule in docket [EPA-HQ-OPPT-2017-0245](#)[Exit EPA website](#) on [Regulations.gov](#)[Exit EPA website](#). The comment period closed on April 29, 2022.

The proposed rule is the second time EPA has updated the voluntary consensus standards incorporated by reference in the 2016 final rule. On February 7, 2018, EPA published a final rule to update several voluntary consensus standards listed at 40 CFR § 770.99 and incorporated them by reference in the Formaldehyde Emission Standards for Composite Wood Products rule. Read the 2018 voluntary consensus standards final rule in the Federal Register.

## Rule History

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On July 7, 2010, President Obama signed the Formaldehyde Standards for Composite Wood Products Act into law. On June 10, 2013, EPA proposed two regulations:

The two proposed rules were combined for the final rule to consolidate requirements into a single rule to help regulated entities and other interested parties better understand how various requirements are related without having to cross-reference between two separate rules.

## Additional Resources

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Visit our [Resources, Guidance Materials for the Formaldehyde Emission Standards for Composite Wood Products Rule](#) page for additional information about the formaldehyde emission standards rule including factsheets, questions and answers and small entity compliance guides.