

Newsroom>An Open Letter to Journalists on Behalf of the Formaldehyde Industry

Over the last year there has been a trend of erroneous and slanted stories about the use of formaldehyde in consumer and industrial applications. The falsehoods are often pushed by activist groups with a hidden financial or ideological agenda. The Formaldehyde Council, Inc., a non-profit association that represents the leading producers and users of formaldehyde in the United States — companies that are responsible for 3.6 million jobs in the U.S. and contribute \$127 billion to our national economy annually — is urging reporters to apply strict standards of accuracy, objectivity and sourcing on these issues.

Here are just a few recent examples of erroneous reporting in the national news media:

* On Nov. 11, 2008, Good Morning America reporter Andrea Canning alleged that Victoria's Secret bras tested positive for formaldehyde and may have caused a severe allergic reaction in an Ohio woman who had brought a lawsuit. But the source's information was false and after being informed of this, GMA refused to set the record straight.

* Just weeks later, GMA contributor Wendy Bounds warned viewers against kitchen cabinets containing urea formaldehyde binder because "it's a carcinogen." But getting cancer from cabinets is physiologically impossible and again GMA refused to acknowledge the facts.

* Many news outlets uncritically aired unproven claims that Transportation Security Administration uniforms were causing allergic reactions from formaldehyde, despite the fact that the uniform manufacturer had made 70 million shirts without receiving any complaints.

* Numerous others described household products that are "formaldehyde-free" as "healthier" – although that too is scientifically and medically unproven.

* Following a public meeting held by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in New Orleans concerning formaldehyde and FEMA trailers, reporters for both the Associated Press and the New Orleans Times-Picayune reported accounts that completely excluded any comment from industry sources, even after speaking with FCI representatives, being invited to a pre-event scientific briefing and being granted access to an MD with extensive knowledge/experience in formaldehyde exposure.

* Perhaps the most irresponsible reporting occurred in the wake of a March 12 press conference held by the Campaign for Safe Cosmetics. It has been alleged that a number of children's personal care products contained harmful levels of formaldehyde. The vast majority of outlets simply transcribed the group's press release and neglected to read the report. Importantly, the report revealed that testing proved that only trace levels of formaldehyde were discovered and these levels are so insignificant that they pose no danger to anyone. Furthermore, the products in question all complied with government safety standards.

Readers and viewers deserve the truth. When activists are pushing bad science, they should be exposed not showcased. When trial lawyers use the press to scare up class action suits, they should be fully scrutinized.

At [FCI](#), we want an open dialogue with journalists because we believe that it will support the balanced and objective reporting that journalists seek generally and particularly important when informing the public about their health. As a start, we would like to offer some facts about formaldehyde.

- * Knowledgeable scientists familiar with the vast research database agree that at the low levels of formaldehyde to which people are normally exposed, either through internal or external sources, there is essentially no risk;

- * Formaldehyde is one of the most studied substances in existence. It occurs naturally in the air we breathe, we produce it internally and it does not accumulate in the environment or in plants, animals or people;

- * Government oversight and regulation of formaldehyde is extensive. OSHA, EPA, FDA, CPSC and HUD have conducted detailed risk assessment evaluations on this chemical over the years;

- * Formaldehyde is a necessary, commonplace building block ingredient for making thousands of essential materials used in consumer, automotive, construction, defense and aerospace applications.

We encourage your feedback and we hope you will join us in vigilantly confronting those that are purposely misleading the public.

Sincerely,

Betsy Natz
Executive Director
Formaldehyde Council, Inc.