

ATTENTION: KATRINA RELIEF TRAILER DONEES

We were alerted via a CBS Evening News broadcast on Wednesday, May 16, 2007 http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2007/05/16/cbsnews_investigates/main2819179.shtml?source=search_story to a potential issue regarding the aforementioned Federal Surplus property. The story indicates that travel trailers manufactured by Gulf Stream Coach are testing with elevated levels of formaldehyde.

What the story did not indicate it is that there are numerous, conflicting standards for formaldehyde exposure. The EPA Indoor Air Quality guidelines are meant for residential home use. The guidelines indicate that emissions above .1 ppm can cause watery eyes, burning sensations in the eyes and throat, nausea, and difficulty in breathing in some humans. The CBS Evening News tested levels at .17 ppm in Gulf Steam Coach units.

There are, however, additional points to be considered. They are as follows:

1. The Katrina travel trailers being donated to eligible organizations are not meant to be used as permanent residential dwellings.
2. OSHA recognizes a permissible exposure limit of .75 ppm before personal protection is required and an action level of .5 ppm before monitoring is required. Using the travel trailers as workspaces, temporary incident response, rescue relief, etc would mean that the OSHA “workday” standards are most appropriate. FEMA selected this standard for its’ trailer inspectors.
3. Other standards set by the American Industrial Hygiene Association and the American Conference of Governmental and Industrial Hygienists also have higher limits (1.0 ppm and .3 ppm, respectively) than the EPA recommendation for residential indoor air quality.
4. FEMA commissioned a very recent and narrowly focused study of formaldehyde levels in Katrina relief trailers. The Department of Health and Human Services’ Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry in Atlanta, GA reported that open ventilation of trailers for four (4) days resulted in a 75% reduction in formaldehyde (to levels below health concerns for sensitive individuals). <http://www.fema.gov/news/newsrelease.fema?id=36010>
5. The use of urea-formaldehyde in particleboard adhesives is so commonplace, that DCED’s Housing Standards Division requires a health statement (regarding proper ventilation) accompany the sale of every mobile and modular home.

Given these facts, the DGS Bureau of Supplies and Surplus has developed a health notice with specific recommendations for donees of surplus Gulf Steam Coach and all other travel trailers and mobile homes. We are strongly recommending that donees follow these guidelines that include measures put forth by the FEMA study and other health organizations. The health notice attached to this cover sheet is being sent to all prior

recipients of all surplus travel trailers (including Gulf Stream Coach), will be sent to all future recipients, and is posted on our website.

Additionally, we will test Gulf Stream Coach trailers with colorimetric tubes for formaldehyde levels both before and after ventilation and provide documentation of test results to donees. We will randomly sample other manufacturers' travel trailers and mobile homes (which are not drop shipped) to insure safe levels of formaldehyde as a precaution.

Please contact Ken Hess or Scott Pepperman at 717-787-6159 or by email at GS-fedsurplus@state.pa.us with any questions or requests for additional information.