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Cal/OSHA Decides Not to Lower Permissible Wood Dust Exposure

MEMPHIS, TENN. – The California Occupational Safety and Health Administration (Cal/OSHA) Standards Board declined a staff proposal to lower the existing permissible exposure limit (PEL) for wood dust from 5 milligrams per cubic meter to 1 milligram per cubic meter after testimony from the American Wood Council (AWC).

AWC has been engaged in the review process for the last several years and coordinated a small coalition, which included several allied trade associations, to oppose the proposal including NHLA.

“Cal/OSHA staff did not generate sufficient information to claim the 1 milligram per cubic meter level was feasible to achieve. A PEL of anything less than 2 would force many workers to wear respirators, contrary to the hierarchy of controls,” said AWC Chief Scientist Stewart Holm, who testified at the meeting.

Ultimately, the Standards Board voted against the recommendation to lower the PEL and asked Cal/OSHA to restart the rulemaking.

“This positive result is directly related to our industry’s tradition of working together to achieve a common goal,” stated Lorna Christie, NHLA Executive Director. “Many thanks go out to the following associations for their work in this effort: American Wood Council, The Composite Panel Association, Hardwood Manufacturers Association, National Wood Flooring Association, Hardwood Plywood and Veneer Association and the Kitchen Cabinet Manufacturers Association.”

The world’s largest and oldest hardwood industry association, NHLA represents more than 800 companies and individuals that produce, use and sell North American hardwood lumber, or provide equipment, supplies or services to the hardwood industry. It was founded in 1898 to establish a uniform system of grading rules for the measurement and inspection of hardwood lumber. Since 1980, its headquarters have been in Memphis, Tenn. To learn more about NHLA, please visit www.nhla.com.

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