

Testimony of Harry Demorest to the California Air Resources Board
April 26, 2007

Dr. Sawyer and Members of the Air Resources Board

For the record, my name is Harry Demorest. I am the CEO of Columbia Forest Products. On behalf of the 4000 employees of our employee-owned business, I am pleased to testify today at this historic hearing and to urge you to take bold steps to make California a national leader in the reduction of formaldehyde emissions from composite wood products.

Columbia Forest Products is a 50 year old company. In North America, we are the largest manufacturer of hardwood plywood, veneer and flooring. Our position as market leader – we have a 40% market share – is in large measure due to our strong commitment to environmental stewardship. We know that smart business practices and smart environmental practices go hand in hand.

So it was natural for us to partner with Dr. Li, of Oregon State University, to develop and bring to market an innovative soy-based adhesive that could replace traditional urea-formaldehyde resins – creating a superior composite wood product, while eliminating the toxic air contaminants associated with formaldehyde-based glues. Additional significant benefits for us came in protecting the health of our workers and lowering the costs at our plants, to comply with clean air regulations.

We believe that your Staff Report presents overwhelming evidence that the proposed Airborne Toxic Control Measure is the right path for California's future – achieving meaningful health and environmental benefits, with proven and readily-available technology.

At the same time, because of what we know about the industry, we urge CARB to be more aggressive in establishing a California "background standard" and a swift implementation timeline – requiring a transition to low and no-formaldehyde resin innovations before the end of this decade.

WE CARE.
After all, it's our company.

As a businessman, the issue is very simple: urea-formaldehyde is a dangerous, toxic air contaminant. There is no safe threshold for exposure to this known carcinogen. And we know how to eliminate it from the products we make...with negligible costs to the consumer. So we just have to do it.

Regrettably, some members of our industry have a high degree of resistance to the proposed ATCM and will go to great lengths to delay or derail it – already they have undertaken a campaign to actively discredit products made from non-formaldehyde-based resins. Their claims are simply false. The real question remains – if they are desperate enough to make these phony statements about our products, can you believe anything they say?

California deserves the kind of thorough and thoughtful consideration this Board is giving to the reduction of formaldehyde emissions from composite wood products. Thank you and your staff for your leadership in improving the human health and the environment and helping to position California for future leadership in the emerging green building economy.