

Reading Environmental Data Sheets

Modern furniture products are constructed of a variety of materials, each having unique chemical content, emission profile, and end-of-useful life management opportunities. While it is difficult to predict what needs and capabilities the future holds, we can take steps today to provide basic information about the products we build and how they might eventually be returned to the resource stream. In addition, the contemporary user of office furniture has come to expect fact-based technical information to be presented in a way that is both concise and comprehensive. Environmental Data Sheets (EDS) provide basic response to the most frequently asked questions about HON's product, environmental performance, and commitment. The following is an overview of the information provided by HON's Environmental Data Sheets:

1. Identity of the product

This section includes the common name of the product family described by the EDS and the model number of the specific product tested for indoor air emissions. It is common for manufacturers to conduct air quality testing on the largest product or the product with the greatest surface area within a given product category. For example: a five-drawer, 42" wide lateral file is constructed of the same material as a two-drawer, letter-size lateral file. Therefore, an end user can assume that material percentages will be approximately equivalent and the emission profile will represent the two-drawer filing cabinet at a lower level.

2. Major components, recycled content and end-of-useful life recommendations

This section identifies the major components by percentage of total product weight, the percentage of recycled content in each major component, and the post-consumer or post-industrial origins if known. To the extent practical, EDS provide recommendations for end-of-useful life management consistent with the Federal Trade Commission Part 260 Guide for Self-Declared Marketing Claims. This assumes that an end user will recycle materials that are easily disassembled and readily accepted by recyclers in the local area.

3. Basic manufacturing process

Section three gives a brief description of the process used to assemble the product. Materials known to be of common concern, such as adhesives for off-gassing and packaging due to the generation of waste at the end user's workplace, are addressed to alert the end user to alternative material used by the manufacturer and/or options the end user may have to reduce environmental impact.

4. Indoor air quality test results

Emissions from building most materials, including carpet, ceiling tiles, and furniture, are greatest immediately after the product is assembled and then decay over two to three weeks to a very low level. Section four reports if and when a product has been assessed for indoor air impact and whether or not a product meets the requirements of various test protocols.

When reading indoor air test reports, it is important to consider the ability of the test report to represent the product over time. For example, a painted metal filing cabinet has a limited number of

materials and there is little variability in the manufacturing process. Therefore, a test report dated within the last five years will likely describe the product's current emission rate. Other materials, such as fiberglass and carpet, lack the consistency of steel and may require more frequent testing to ensure the accuracy of the results.

5. Care and maintenance instructions

A major contributor of indoor air pollution is the common cleaning materials used by janitorial and maintenance personnel. Many have strong solvents and biocides that persist long after the product is used. This section helps the end user understand how to clean and maintain the product in a way that minimizes the impact of cleaning materials and ensure the products fulfill their design function for as long as the office workplace needs them.

6. Non-obsolescence and warranty statement

The term non-obsolescence originated when some manufacturers designed products to fail after a specific service life. The concept is rare if non-existent today and has been replaced with the ability of a design to have an extendable life. This is often expressed as the manufacturer's commitment to service the product and develop future enhancements to be retrofitable to older product.

7. Manufacturer's commitment statement

Section seven provides the user with a basic description of HON's environmental management system and processes in place to monitor and reduce the company's environmental footprint.

8. Other applicable standards

Section eight attempts to present information on other performance testing completed on the product that may be useful to the end user comparing products. For example, seating and panel products typically undergo testing for flame spread and smoke propagation. Panel products and paper storage cabinets are typically tested to ANSI/BIFMA stability standards.

In summary, Environmental Data Sheets provide a means of quickly accessing HON's ecological awareness and commitment to reducing the product's environmental footprint. Request the underlying documentation of claims made within an EDS to better understand how a particular claim relates to the complete product.