

Friday 28 May 2004

Closure of Deca-BDE Scientific Risk Assessment: European Union decision supports continued use of Deca-BDE

We welcome the outcome of the 26-27 May meeting of the EU Member States' Competent Authorities which agreed to close the Deca-BDE Risk Assessment without restrictions and to support an industry voluntary programme of industrial emissions control.

Deca-BDE is a flame retardant which currently saves thousands of lives each year by improving the fire resistance of applications such as plastic housings for electronic equipment in the home and textile seat coverings in public places.

After 10 years, the European risk assessment report has not identified a risk from the use of this flame retardant. The Competent Authorities agreed that issues relating to the environmental findings of Deca-BDE in Europe should be addressed by the initiation of a monitoring programme. This will be complemented by a further voluntary programme of industrial emissions control in partnership with Deca-BDE user industries in Europe. European flame retardant and textile industry representatives at the meeting committed to take forward this programme immediately.

The monitoring and emissions control programmes will provide an unprecedented level of environmental & health protection for a chemical whose comprehensive risk assessment has not identified a risk. It is planned that the programmes will deliver reports to EU chemical policy regulators every 2 years, thus enabling a close monitoring of the environmental trends for Deca-BDE. The details of these programmes will also involve close consultation with EU Member State technical experts.

We expect the Risk Assessment report to enable the European Commission to exempt Deca-BDE from restrictions under the RoHS Directive. Such a proposal should follow the current stakeholder consultations on the RoHS Directive which last until 5 July 2004.