

February 2004

EU Risk Assessment of HBCD – Update

This document aims to provide information on the status of the EU Risk Assessment and for the PBT Assessment of HBCD. HBCD is a flame retardant which is added to polystyrene insulation foams in the building sector as well as being used in certain synthetic textiles.

Context and Timing Outlook

In 1995, the European Commission listed HBCD as one of the priority substances for risk assessment. The process of an EU Risk Assessment is based on the EU's Existing Substance Regulation (793/93/EC) and is the most comprehensive assessment of the environmental and human health risks related to the life cycle of a chemical, in this case HBCD, including its manufacture, use and end-of-life management.

The completion of the EU Risk Assessment on HBCD is not expected before end-2004 due to ongoing studies.

Outcome of last EU Technical Meetings

HBCD has been discussed in-depth at the Technical Meeting in September (both the Human Health and the Environment part) and in December 2003 (Environment part only).

Industry has submitted significant amounts of new toxicity, fate and emission studies to the rapporteur (Keml/Sweden). By generating real data, estimated levels of HBCD emissions to the environment have been able to be substantially reduced from the previous conservative estimates. Based upon this real data and not conservative default values, the new report excluded sensitisation, whereby effects would be found at minute quantities, as a relevant end-point. Finally, possible labeling requirements for HBCD placed on the European market remain under discussion.

With regard to the question as to whether HBCD could be a PBT or vPvB chemical, the TM in December accepted that extensive studies clearly demonstrate that HBCD does not fulfill the "P" criterion according to the EU Technical Guidance Document. Industry has agreed to conduct further studies to generate additional data with regard to the degradation products of HBCD.

EU Timeline

The discussion of the Human Health Report has been postponed to TM II in June or to TM III in September 2004. It is likely that the Environment Report will be discussed further at TM IV in December 2004.

For more information please contact, René Montaigne at the EBFRIP Secretariat.