

## The January 2015 deadline for HPDs: did we survive?

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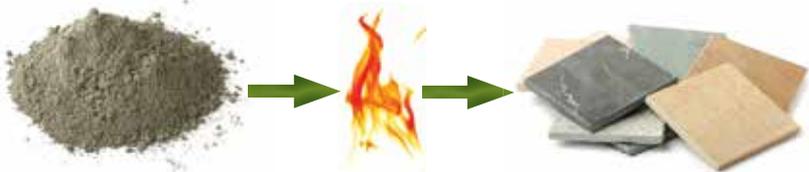


Do you remember the panic over Y2K? It was seemingly all anyone could talk about toward the close of 1999. At the stroke of midnight on December 31<sup>st</sup>, it was believed the year 2000 would be indistinguishable from 1900, causing all computers to crash and creating financial and infrastructural chaos.

A Y2K-like scare gripped the manufacturing community near the end of 2014. At least 26 of the largest architectural firms in the U.S. mandated manufacturers supply HPDs (Health Product Declarations) for all building products by January 1, 2015. Stated consequences for failing to meet the deadline ranged from pursuit of alternative product options to complete deletion from product catalogs.

Some building product manufacturers, including a few in the tile industry, met the January 1 deadline for HPDs, but many didn't. And yet, as with Y2K, everyone is doing just fine.

So, what *is* happening with HPDs? HPDs, which involve building product disclosure of chemical ingredients and associated risks and hazards, are still very much a part of the overall green building conversation and continue to be heavily supported within the architectural community. In fact, today there are seemingly more inquiries about human health ramifications of products than there are about environmental ramifications. Nevertheless, since the January 1 "deadline" has come and gone, the urgency for



Ceramics, made from natural ingredients that are fused together to become homogenous and inert, are being considered by the HPD Collaborative as having no assumed health risks and available for declaration as the primary component of ceramic tile.

HPDs has relaxed to a certain extent. This can be attributed to three main factors: delayed implementation of LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Version 4, the as-yet unreleased Version 2 of the HPD Open Standard, and the lingering controversy surrounding HPDs in general.

## **LEED**

There are many initiatives driving the adoption of HPDs, but the biggest is arguably USGBC's (US Green Building Council) LEED. When LEED Version 4 was released in late 2013, it was announced that "points" would be awarded toward certification for the use of products with HPDs in LEED building projects. The 60,000-plus registered LEED projects and 20,000-plus certified LEED projects, along with LEED's substantial influence in the green building marketplace, thrust HPDs into the spotlight. However, after the release of LEED Version 4, it was announced that projects could be registered in accordance with older versions of LEED through most of 2016. As a result, according to a USGBC presentation given at a Chemicals Summit in April 2015, there have been just 18 projects certified to LEED Version 4, only one of which claimed HPD-related points toward certification.

## **Version 2, HPD Open Standard**

Another factor slowing the pace of architectural adoption of HPDs has been the delayed release of Version

2 of the HPD Open Standard, the document that defines the requirements and chemical cutoff thresholds for manufacturers to follow when creating HPDs. Version 2 will contain some new and several modified requirements for HPDs, and many manufacturers have elected to wait for its release before issuing HPDs for their products.

## **Material contents vs. end-user exposure**

Finally, even with widespread architectural demand, some remain reluctant to accommodate HPDs. There is an ongoing debate over material content vs. end-user exposure, and manufacturers and scientists alike agree that pure chemical ingredient reporting can be misleading, especially when chemicals are encapsulated or are only one component of a harmless compound.

Even though their adoption has been delayed, chances are good that HPDs are here to stay, at least for the foreseeable future. Organizations like USGBC have invested substantial time and effort in establishing provisions for HPDs in building project specifications. USGBC will require the use of LEED Version 4 exclusively beginning in October 2016, and many have predicted that this will generate more demand for HPDs. Additionally, the HPD discussion will likely be reinvigorated when Version 2 of the HPD Open Standard is released. And finally, manufacturers recognize the general rise in demand for material health transparency and are working

## **SUSTAINABILITY** FEATURE

toward consensus on HPD solutions that are technically correct and provide relevant information.

### **What's next for the tile industry?**

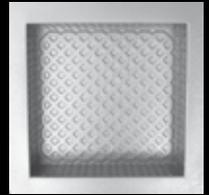
TCNA and its members are well versed in LEED Version 4's HPD-related requirements and can provide education and project solutions in preparation for increased demands as 2016 approaches. Additionally, TCNA has been in communication with the HPD Collaborative, the organization responsible for developing the HPD Open Standard, and it is expected that special considerations will soon be given to certain building materials, including

some ceramics, recognizing them as inherently inert with no assumed health risks. And because ceramic tiles are made from natural ingredients that are fused together to form a homogenous and inert product, the ceramic tile industry can readily provide HPDs to satisfy a variety of project requirements.

Did we survive the January 1, 2015 deadline "crisis"? Not only did we survive, it is expected that the tile industry will remain in good position as health-related green building initiatives such as HPDs evolve, with support from various parties working to increase awareness and ensure HPDs accurately address ceramic tile.

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