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SENATE
S. No. 1847

RECEIVED BY: *ji*

Introduced by Senator Miriam Defensor Santiago

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The Constitution, Article 2, Section 15 provides:

The State shall protect and promote the right to health of the people and instill health consciousness among them.

Medium density fiberboard is an engineered wood product formed by breaking down softwood into wood fibers, often in a defibrator, combining it with wax and a resin binder, and forming panels by applying high temperature and pressure. It is a building material similar in application to plywood but made up of separated fibers, not wood veneers. It is denser than normal particle board. Here in the Philippines, it is often used for the construction of homes and in sound systems as a speaker enclosure.

In all fiberboards, formaldehyde resins are used to bond together the constituent parts. This is usually urea formaldehyde, but some fibreboard including exterior or marine quality board use stronger glues such as phenol formaldehyde. Even at a low level, exposure to formaldehyde through inhalation can cause irritation to the eyes, nose, throat and mucous membrane. Formaldehyde can also affect the skin, leading to dermatitis, and the respiratory system causing asthma and rhinitis. The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), part of the World Health Organization, quoted evidence that even short term exposure to formaldehyde, at far below the legal limit allowable in the European Union, could cause irritation to the eyes, nose and throat.

The IARC's findings also stated that wood dust is a carcinogen and that formaldehyde is probably carcinogenic to humans. IARC was also concerned about the reproductive hazards of formaldehyde. Formaldehyde is classified throughout Europe as a Category 3 Carcinogen. This

means it is a substance which "causes concern for humans owing to possible carcinogenic effects but, in respect of which, available information is not adequate for making a satisfactory assessment." This puts formaldehyde on the list of potential carcinogens, meaning it should be replaced where possible, and if not, subject to rigorous controls that reduce exposure to the lowest possible level.*

Miriam Defensor Santiago
MIRIAM DEFENSOR SANTIAGO
av.

* This bill was originally filed in the 14th Congress.



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1 AN ACT,
2 REGULATING THE SALE OF MEDIUM DENSITY FIBERBOARDS

Be it enacted by the Senate and the House of Representatives of the Philippines in Congress assembled:

3 SECTION 1. *Short Title.* – This Act shall be known as the “MDF Regulatory Act.”

4 SECTION 2. *Definition of terms.* – As used in this Act, the term–

5 (A) “Medium density fiberboard” or MDF is an engineered wood product formed by
6 breaking down softwood into wood fibers, often in a defibrator, combining it with wax and a
7 resin binder, and forming panels by applying high temperature and pressure; and

8 (B) “Secretary” means the Secretary of Health.

9 SECTION 3. *Packaging Requirement.* – Any person who offers medium density
10 fiberboard for sale shall include a clear, conspicuous, and easily readable label on the packaging
11 stating:

12 WARNING: This product contains a chemical known to cause cancer,
13 birth defects, and other reproductive hazards. Take measures to prevent inhalation
14 of particles when working with this product.

15 SECTION 4. *Requirements for a Permit.* – Before an employer may be granted a permit
16 or allowed to continue to manufacture medium density fiberboards or to use this material in any
17 stage of the employer’s business, the employer must comply with the following requirements–

18 (A) The amount of MDF emission should be limited to 0.3 parts per million;

1 (B) Gloves and suitable gas masks should be provided by the employer for employees
2 who handle or work with MDF;

3 (C) There should be adequate ventilation when working with MDF. Where dust
4 cannot be eliminated, the employer must introduce control measures that adequately control dust
5 levels; and

6 (D) Such other measures that may be required by the Secretary of Health through
7 appropriate rules and regulations.

8 SECTION 5. *Penalties.* – The Secretary is empowered to establish and assess penalties or
9 fines against an employer for violations of this Act or regulations adopted under this Act. In no
10 circumstance will any penalties or fines exceed P10,000.00 for each day the permit holder
11 remains in violation.

12 SECTION 6. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – Not later than ninety (90) days from
13 the effectivity of this Act, the Secretary shall promulgate the rules and regulations to implement
14 this Act.

15 SECTION 7. *Separability Clause.* – If any provision or part hereof is held invalid or
16 unconstitutional, the remainder of the law or the provision not otherwise affected shall remain
17 valid and subsisting.

18 SECTION 8. *Repealing Clause.* – Any law, presidential decree or issuance, executive
19 order, letter of instruction, administrative order, rule, or regulation contrary to or inconsistent
20 with the provisions of this Act is hereby repealed, modified, or amended accordingly.

21 SECTION 9. *Effectivity Clause.* – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its
22 publication in at least two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,