



EPS No.1019

Subject: Foam-Control EPS and Fire Retardants

Date: March 2009 (Revised February 2015)

Foam-Control EPS is a key component to help reduce the use of energy in buildings. The energy reduction from using Foam-Control EPS translates into important savings of carbon dioxide emissions to the environment over the entire life of the building. Foam-Control EPS is recognized to achieve Green Building initiatives when used in foundation, wall, and roof insulation systems.

In addition to important energy reduction, compliance with fire and life safety is a first priority issue when using Foam-Control EPS. The use of foam plastic insulation in buildings is regulated by building codes across North America. The most widely adopted building code is the International Building Code (IBC) published by the International Code Council (ICC). The IBC provides a series of requirements for the use of materials in buildings. For foam plastics, the typical requirements are:

1. The packages and containers display a third party (approved agency) label showing compliance with IBC requirements.
2. The foam plastic shall have a flame spread index of not more than 75 and a smoke-developed index of not more than 450 where tested in the maximum thickness for use in accordance with ASTM E84.
3. The foam plastic is separated from the interior of the building with 1/2" gypsum board.

EPS can be manufactured without flame retardants, but the resulting product would not meet the fire performance required by the IBC. The use of a flame retardant in EPS is essential to ensure compliance with the IBC, provide for a safe building environment, and to protect lives and property from the risk of fire. **Foam-Control EPS is always manufactured with flame retardants to ensure compliance with the fire requirements of the IBC.**

Hexabromocyclododecane or simply "HBCD" is the fire retardant historically used in EPS.

However, significant research has been conducted by the EPS industry to evaluate alternatives to HBCD in EPS. The industry is now transitioning to an alternative polymeric product that significantly reduces the potential impact on the environment.

The EPA has thoroughly reviewed the alternative polymeric product and confirmed the improved environment profile.¹

Reference: ¹ Flame Retardant Alternatives for Hexabromocyclododecane (HBCD), United States Environmental Protection Agency. 2014.



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