

THE MYTHS IN THE DEBATE ON PVC

In December 2004, a group called Be Safe, from the Center for Health, Environment and Justice, held a Day of Action against PVC. Activists targeted companies such as Johnson and Johnson and Microsoft for their use of PVC. According to Be Safe, if the companies did not begin a phase out of PVC within several months, a broader consumer email/letter campaign working with college students would begin against the companies. Their slogan is PVC: The Poison Plastic. The report cites the usual litany of misleading Greenpeace claims about health and environmental issues related to vinyl manufacturing, use and disposal, but the main focus was as vinyl building products come out of service, there would be a crisis for landfills and incinerators.

The Vinyl Institute has released the following Fact Sheet to address the major myths in the report. This is vital information all of our sales representatives should be aware of, so that you have the facts if questions arise in the field as to the "dangers" of PVC.

MYTH: Vinyl is poisonous **FACT:** Vinyl has been used safely for decades. It is the material of choice for blood bags and medical tubing to maintain the world's blood supply, and support critical healthcare procedures. Vinyl is the material of choice to keep our water supply safe and clean. Vinyl's durability and toughness makes it the most widely used plastic for all types of building materials, including windows, siding, flooring and wallcoverings.

MYTH: Amounts of vinyl waste are threatening a waste crisis **FACT:** As the report itself acknowledges, vinyl accounts for less than 1 percent of landfill waste. 70 percent of vinyl goes into long-term applications such as pipes, siding, window frames that last for many decades. Interest is growing in recycling construction wastes, and vinyl recycling will benefit from this in the future.

MYTH: Vinyl production is harmful **FACT:** Vinyl manufacturing is strictly regulated and carefully controlled by manufacturers. Based on OSHA reports, the illness/injury rate for members of The VI has declined steadily and is much lower than the rate for the US manufacturing sector in total.

MYTH: Vinyl is a major source of dioxin **FACT:** This is just plain false. The main source of dioxin is open burning of all materials. According to the EPA, vinyl manufacturing is a tiny source, lower than many other industrial sources. Since the 1970's, dioxin levels have fallen consistently, while vinyl production has more than tripled.

MYTH: Burning vinyl is hazardous **FACT:** The products of vinyl combustion are no more hazardous than many other common materials, both natural and synthetic.

MYTH: Vinyl is a problem in landfills **FACT:** Again the report acknowledges vinyl accounts for less than 1 percent of landfill waste, and since it is an inert material, vinyl is used to line and cap landfills.

MYTH: Vinyl undermines recycling **FACT:** Vinyl can be remelted and remolded repeatedly. Many companies collect and used recycled vinyl to make various products. One billion pounds of post-industrial vinyl scrap is recycled every year. Post consumer recycling is still small, mostly due to the fact that vinyl is used in products that last for decades.

MYTH: Safer alternatives exist **FACT:** Such claims are almost never backed up. Vinyl is the material of choice for many applications because of its proven safe, cost effective performance. Greenpeace and other similar organizations consider all plastics problematic.