

PALLET PHYTOSANITARY PROJECT NEWSLETTER



A Cooperative Effort of the Limestone Bluffs Resource Conservation and Development Area And The Wood Education and Resource Center

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REGULATORY UPDATE

No-Bug Logo Status

The intent of the IPPC to use the familiar no-bug logo was suspended last year following a copyright infringement issue with a US company. As a result, the IPPC was forced to develop a new logo and seek registration as a trademark. On January 28, 2003 an IPPC news release indicated that the "Guidelines for regulating wood packaging material in international trade continues to be suspended". The news release gave no indication about when the suspension might be lifted.

A follow-up conversation with officials at APHIS confirmed the continuing suspension and that the sole reason for the suspension is the logo problem. The best estimate at this time is that the logo issue should be resolved by the end of June 2003.

US Import Regulations

USDA is drafting regulations to require treatment and marking of imported solid wood packaging material consistent with the suspended standard. The draft regulation is currently undergoing internal review prior to publication as a proposed rule in the Federal

Register. Following publication in the Federal Register there will be a 60-day public comment period.

Repairing or Remanufacturing Wood Packing

The APHIS website recently updated their frequently asked questions to address repairing or remanufacturing wood packing. When repairing or remanufacturing wood packing, program participants must retreat components of the packaging unit (pallet, carton, etc.), prior to applying the program mark. Recycled pallets must be completely retreated even if only one board is replaced.

Australian Heat Treatment Specifications

The Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS) has established heat treatment specifications that are significantly more stringent than the IPPC baseline standard. The specification states that timber must undergo a high humidity treatment in an enclosed chamber in which the dry bulb temperature is not less than 74° C (165°F) and the wet bulb depression is not more than 2°C (3.6°F). The core temperature of the wood must be maintained at a minimum 74°C (165°F) for the duration of the

treatment. Duration of treatment depends on thickness, but is a minimum of 4 hours for material 0-25 mm and up to 18 hours for pieces 151-200 mm. In addition, all wood must have an average moisture content less than 12 percent based on oven-dry weight or mass.

STATE LEVEL GRANT PROGRAM

Twenty-three of the thirty-two states in the eastern hardwood region participated in the state level grant program, sponsored as part of the Pallet Phytosanitary Project. Each state contracted, at a minimum, to attend the Briefing Session last spring and to sponsor at least two informational meetings for local businesses, organizations, and interested individuals. Several of the states participating have completed their contracts, including: Georgia, Missouri, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, and Virginia. A brief summary of each state's grant activities is provided below:

Georgia

Two half-day workshops were conducted at the Georgia Forestry Commission Headquarters in Macon, GA. The program consisted of an review of the IPPC regulations, an overview of methyl bromide usage, and a section on certification, heat treatment methods, and support services.

A total of 46 individuals attended the workshops. Seventeen attendees were from packaging, crating, pallet manufacturers, 11 from sawmills and lumber sales companies, 3 transportation and freight forwarders, 6 government or university, and 9 miscellaneous. A videotape of the

workshop was made and copies may be requested from John Wells of the Georgia Forestry Commission.

Missouri

The Missouri Forest Products Association sponsored five informational meetings, four in Missouri (located in Kansas City, Ellington, St. Peters, and Mountain Vernon and one in Kansas (Emporia). Each session was about 2 hours in length. A total of 65 individuals attended the five sessions. Over 90 percent of attendees were from pallet and packaging businesses.

A number of incorrect rumors about the IPPC regulations surfaced at the meetings, which the speakers promptly corrected. In addition, most attendees had heard about heat treatment requirements, but didn't know any of the details.

The Association has also developed a special website for its members, where phytosanitary questions are posed and answered.

Pennsylvania

The Pennsylvania Hardwoods Development Council conducted a series of five workshops (located in Clarion, Monroeville, King of Prussia, Harrisburg, and Williamsport), with total attendance of 99 individuals, representing over 80 companies. Roughly 60 percent of attendees were from pallet and packaging manufacturers, 30 percent from sawmills and parts suppliers, and 10 percent service providers, logistic companies, and end-users. Each attendee received a packet of reference materials.

Most companies attending had some general knowledge of the standards, but there was some confusion with the current EU softwood guidelines. There was general concern over the cost associated with enrolling in one of the audit programs, with some expressed interest in the State of Pennsylvania or Penn State University becoming accredited auditors. Several attendees indicated that fumigation was their treatment of choice, while others viewed the regulations as an opportunity to expand their business by providing heat treatment services.

South Carolina

The South Carolina Forestry Commission sponsored two informational meetings, one in Charleston with 12 participants and one in Greenville with 19 participants. Speakers were from APHIS, NC State University, Timber Products Inspection, and Brunner Hildebrand Dry Kiln Company.

A short briefing session on the new regulations was provided to the South Carolina Midlands International Trade Association. Additional assistance was provided to the South Carolina Manufacturing Extension Partnership, South Carolina District Export Council, and South Carolina Export Consortium.

Virginia

The Virginia Department of Forestry conducted four workshops. The first workshop was a joint effort of several states and coordinated by Virginia Tech. Approximately 100 people from multiple states attended this workshop. Eight exhibitors of heat treatment and fumigation equipment also participated. Pest Heat also provided a live demonstration of their

heat treatment equipment. The workshop sponsors included: WV Division of Forestry, NC State University, West Virginia University, Delaware Forest Service, USDA Forest Service, NWPCA, ALCA, and NHLA. All workshop attendees received a notebook of reference materials.

Three additional workshops were held, with attendance ranging between five and ten individuals. Lack of attendance at these workshops was attributed, in part, to a perception by companies that the regulations either did not concern them or they would wait till the last minute to react. Further, the suspension of the standard had some folks believing that the regulations will not be implemented.

A significant outcome of the workshops was that the various agencies involved in this issue had an opportunity to interact and better understand their various roles, which should result in more effective delivery of assistance.

COMPETITIVE GRANTS PROGRAM

A major component of the Pallet Phytosanitary Project is the Competitive Grants Program. Proposals were solicited under a Request-for-Proposals this past fall. The purpose of the Grants Program was to fund projects that were supportive of the solid wood packaging and allied industries in dealing with the new international phytosanitary regulations.

Proposals that adapted existing knowledge and technology in new and innovative ways were encouraged. Applied research, technology transfer, and demonstrations project proposals

were all eligible for funding. Both public and private organizations could submit proposals for possible funding.

Seven projects received funding, totaling \$202,775. All awardees were required to provide matching funds. The minimum match for each project was equal to the funds awarded. Following is a list of funded projects:

1. The Effects of Phytosanitary Standards on Wood Packaging Users, University of Minnesota, \$29,287. The researchers will be examining pallet customer perceptions to assess the impact of export packaging requirements on their operations, with emphasis on procurement activities.

2. Dielectric Heat Treating of Green Pallet Parts, PSC, Inc., \$49,808. The application of dielectric RF heating of lumber will be tested as a possible method for meeting the heat treatment requirements of the IPPC Standard.

3. Application of Vacuum to Control Insects in Raw Wood Packaging Materials, Virginia Tech, \$21,860. Researchers will be examining the efficacy of applying a vacuum to eradicate insects in wood packaging materials, as an alternative treatment method.

4. Meeting Current IPPC Heat Treating Standards with Hot Water Bath Treatments, West Virginia University, \$30,000. This research will examine a hot water bath treatment to sanitize pallet components. Additional treatments will include a borate and moldicide in combination with the hot water bath.

5. Microwave Eradication of the Pine Wood Nematode and Beetle Vectors Infesting Wooden Packaging Materials, Penn State University, \$30,000. Microwave energy will be evaluated as a means of destroying nematodes and their associated beetle vectors.

6. 2003 Oklahoma Wood Conference & Equipment Exposition, Ouachita Mountains RC&D, Inc., \$12,000. Project

funds will be used to support outreach efforts of the Forest Utilization Conference & Equipment Exposition with regard to delivering information, sponsoring demonstrations, and showcasing equipment alternatives as they relate to complying with the international phytosanitary measures.

7. An Evaluation of Alternative Materials for Use in the Construction of Pallets, Clemson University, \$29,820. This project will investigate the feasibility of using laminated veneer lumber and plywood in pallet manufacturing applications.

Each of these funded projects contains a specific plan for publicizing and disseminating the project results. At a minimum, all project results will be developed into technical bulletins and widely disseminated through WERC.

A more detailed description of each project will appear in upcoming newsletters.

MISCELLANEOUS

Please feel free to distribute this newsletter via email or hard copy to all interested parties.

This issue of the newsletter and all subsequent issues will be posted on the following USDA Forest Service website:

www.na.fs.fed.us/econaction/palletnews.

Suggestions and items for upcoming newsletter issues are welcomed. Contact Curt Hassler, Project Manager, at (304) 282-5417 or via email at curth@mail.wvnet.edu.