

Industry News

CertiPUR-US assures foams are safe, eco-friendly

By David Perry

HIGH POINT — The CertiPUR-US certification program is sweeping the polyurethane foam industry and strengthening the industry's commitment to produce high-quality, safe and environmentally

friendly foams, officials say.

They describe the program, which has gained substantial industry support, as a winning formula for manufacturers, retailers, consumers and the environment.

CertiPUR-US is a voluntary testing, analysis and

certification program that has come of age with the announcement that all of the major U.S. foam producers are offering CertiPUR-US certified foams, program officials said. Carpenter Co., the largest U.S. foam producer, recently lent its support to the

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*Laurie Simpson,
Therapedic Northwest*

program.

The certification also is gaining traction with retail-

ers, bedding producers report.

"We utilize this program because all foams are not created equal," said Laurie Simpson, president of Therapedic Northwest, based in Auburn, Wash. "We can now guarantee our customers time after time in writing that the foam used in our mattresses meets the demanding CertiPUR-US standards for quality and safety."

Flexible polyurethane foam products that carry the CertiPUR-US label have undergone extensive independent laboratory testing. They have met voluntary standards for low emissions for indoor air quality and have been examined for and are free of prohibited phthalates, formaldehyde, PBDE fire retardants, lead, mercury and heavy metals.

And the foams meet established industry-accepted performance guidelines for durability, officials said.

"The strength of this program is that the certification criteria are credible and extensive — this is not a pay-and-you-get-certified program," said Bryan Myers, marketing and brand manager for Klaussner Home Furnishings. "We are just now seeing consumers demand to know what's inside the products they buy. This program goes a long way in helping answer retailer and consumer questions."

Earlier this year, bedding major Simmons said it would be specifying CertiPUR-US certified foams exclusively. Anne Kozel, brand director of Simmons' specialty sleep division, said consumer research conducted by Simmons indicated that nearly two-thirds of respondents were very or extremely concerned about the health and safety aspects of the products they buy.

"The CertiPUR-US seal helps provide peace of mind see CertiPUR-US, p178



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by certifying that the polyurethane foams in all our mattresses meet strict health and safety requirements," she said.

Concerns about imported foam products and the raw material used in their manufacture prompted the flexible polyurethane foam industry to develop the CertiPUR-US program.

The development was a multi-year process during which the developers worked with foam industry leaders and other key players, officials noted.

A key player in that process was Robert Luedeka, executive director of the Alliance for

Flexible Polyurethane Foam, which manages the CertiPUR-US program.

"We presented the program to furniture and bedding manufacturers to get their reaction," Luedeka recalled. "We talked to environmental scientists and leaders of trade associations, home furnishings retailers and non-governmental organizations. And we created an advisory panel that brought all these voices together to help shape the program so it was something of value and would hold up to market challenges. Our goal was to make this a very transparent process."

After undergoing the initial certification process, CertiPUR-US foams must be recertified every six months for the first year and annually thereafter.

The Alliance for Flexible Polyurethane Foam conducts random sample checks of products in the marketplace to verify that only compliant foams are marketed and sold with the CertiPUR-US label.

CertiPUR-US certification covers all major types of furniture and bedding foams, including conventional polyurethane foam, super-soft polyurethane foam, memory foam, conventional fire retardant foam, and high resilience foam.

The program is an adaptation and an expansion of the European CertiPUR program, developed in 2002 by Europur, the association of European flexible polyurethane foam manufacturers.

Officials said there were some key additions to the

CertiPUR-US program, including the U.S. minimum physical performance criteria and shorter intervals between recertification testing.

CertiPUR-US is open to all flexible polyurethane foam producers, whether based in the United States or elsewhere.

Since its establishment in 2008, the integration of CertiPUR-US into the flexible polyurethane foam market has exceeded expectations, with all major U.S. foam producers now offering CertiPUR-US certified foams, officials said.

Companies offering certified foams include Advanced Urethane Technologies/Sleep Innovations, Carpenter, Flexible Foam Products, Future Foam, FXI Foamex Innovations, Healthcare/HK Foam, Hickory Springs, NCFI Polyure-

thanes, Prestige Fabricators, Premier Foam and Sinomax USA.

Luedeka said interest in the CertiPUR-US program is growing across the home furnishings industry.

"CertiPUR-US is gaining increased acceptance in the bedding market," he said. "It's natural that bedding manufacturers would see the value first because of the nature of their business. Recognition among upholstered furniture manufacturers is now beginning to grow. There is significant value here for early adopters."

"Any time a manufacturer can feel secure about a supply channel it makes for a more confident selling story," said Gerry Borreggine, CEO of Top 10 bedding producer Therapeutic International.


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