

...that the smell of your brand new car can actually make you sick? (And you thought it was just the price tag.) "New car smell" in automobiles is the result of a mix of numerous Volatile Organic Compounds that are released by plastic, vinyl, fabric, and carpet components in a vehicle's interior.

March 2008 Topic:

VOCs - Volatile Organic Compounds

Volatile Organic Compounds, or VOCs, are organic chemical compounds that vaporize and enter the atmosphere under normal conditions. They are a significant contributor to indoor and outdoor air pollution, and their effects on humans can include eye, nose, and throat irritation; headaches, loss of coordination, nausea; damage to liver, kidney, and the central nervous system. Many VOCs are also carcinogenic to humans and animals.

Many of the building materials we use every day release VOCs after they are installed, in the same way automobile interior finishes do. Building materials with high VOC potential include paints, adhesives, solvents, carpet, fabrics, systems furniture, ceiling tiles, certain types of insulation, lumber products containing formaldehyde (MDF, particleboard, plywood, OSB, etc.), and cleaning products. These materials continue to offgas long after they are installed, contributing to a phenomenon known as "Sick Building Syndrome," wherein occupants continually experience many of the symptoms listed above. The effects of VOCs and poor air quality/circulation on occupant health, productivity, and overall employee satisfaction are still being studied, but suffice it to say that VOCs in the office won't make your work day any better.

For additional information go to: <http://www.epa.gov/iaq/voc.html> <http://www.usgbc.org> <http://www.greenseal.org>

Did you know? Green Tips for Home

Paint - Most paint manufacturers now produce low- or no-VOC paints and coatings. These new paints are durable, cost-effective and less harmful to human and environmental health.

Green Seal is an independent non-profit organization dedicated to safeguarding the environment and transforming the marketplace by promoting the manufacture, purchase, and use of environmentally responsible products and services. To find environmentally friendly products including paint and cleaning supplies go to:

<http://www.greenseal.org/findaproduct/index.cfm>

LEED Project Updates

In Construction

- Harvard Medical International - currently pursuing Silver LEED Certification. HMI is scheduled for occupancy by the end of April.

In the Pipeline

- Virgin Money
- Leggat McCall Properties



Green Innovation

Charles Services purchased a bulb eater that can safely demolish up to 1,200 fluorescent bulbs in a single 55 gallon drum. The 3-step filtration system converts the mercury into a non-hazardous form for safe disposal. This will be used on our jobsites and at the office. We also invite employees to bring in their fluorescent bulbs from home for disposal.



For further information or suggestions please email Commodore's Green Building Committee at greenbuilding@commodorebuilders.com.