



MEDIA RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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TESTING BY SIERRA CLUB SHOWS ABNORMAL LEVELS OF FORMALDEHYDE IN FEMA TRAILERS

NEW ORLEANS – A new study conducted by the Sierra Club shows that the indoor air quality of FEMA trailers contains excessive levels of formaldehyde, a carcinogen that can cause various forms of cancer with repeated exposure.

The Sierra Club has tested the indoor air of 31 FEMA trailers in Mississippi and Louisiana to determine formaldehyde levels. Only two tests were at or below the .1 parts per million maximum safety limit recommended by the EPA and the American Lung Association. Several trailers were more than three times over the limit.

Complete test results will be released in a teleconference at 11 a.m. (CST) on Wednesday, March 17. Environmental, science and technology journalists have been invited to participate in the conference that will feature an expert on formaldehyde, a representative from the Sierra Club who will discuss the test results, and a man who lives in a trailer that has three times the safety limit recommended by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Formaldehyde is a colorless, strong smelling gas, often found in particle board, glues and adhesives in the cabinetry, bunk beds and bench seats of camper trailers. Exposure to formaldehyde over the long term will cause lung cancer, nose cancer, and

throat cancer. Formaldehyde is listed as a carcinogen by the U.S. government and exposure of high levels of it can cause cancer.

Residents of FEMA trailers tested by Sierra Club reported problems such as burning eyes, irritated throat, sinus congestion, respiratory problems, persistent coughing, rashes and nose bleeds.

The smell of formaldehyde is noticeable. Some people try to get rid of the fumes by opening windows and doors, purchasing air purifiers, or trying to replace fabricated wood in the trailers with natural wood. Nothing works.

“More than 100,000 people who lost their homes in Katrina are now housed in FEMA trailers in Mississippi and Louisiana,” says Becky Gillette, co-chair of the Mississippi Sierra Club and one of the persons who participated in testing. “This emergency housing is provided at great cost to taxpayers--an average of \$65,000 for 18 months. But is it healthy and safe? We don’t think so.”

The Sierra Club is asking that manufacturers change the way they make trailers so that formaldehyde exposure is reduced or eliminated.

“Isn’t it enough to have lost your home, but then you are placed inside a trailer that can literally poison you,” says Gillette. “This is another example of the government purchasing material that is substandard and dangerous, made by companies that put profit above people.

For more information about formaldehyde, contact

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The Sierra Club's 750,000 members work together to protect communities and the planet. The Club is America's oldest, largest and most influential grassroots environmental organization. The Delta (Louisiana) chapter of the Sierra Club has more than 3,500

members and has been active in local conservation projects for more than 30 years. For more information, contact the organization's website: www.louisiana.sierraclub.org.