

Phthalate Plasticizer Free...Or are They?

September 2015

THE ISSUE

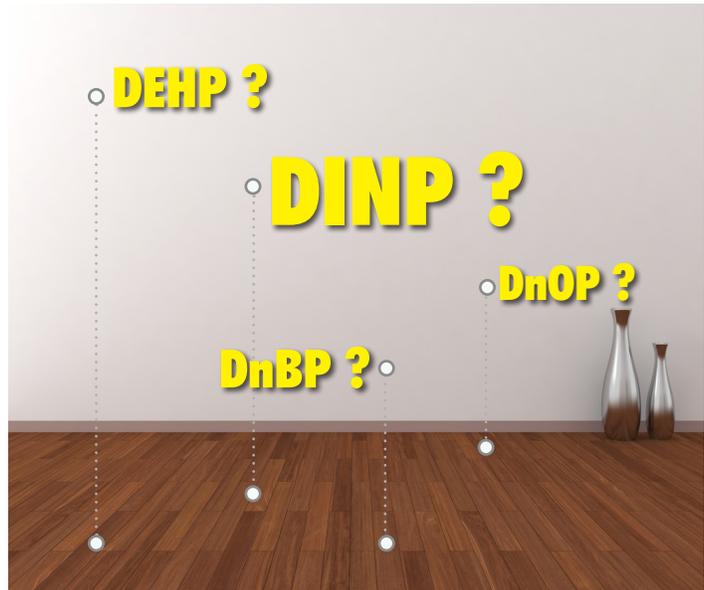
The formulation of vinyl flooring products has been increasingly scrutinized for many years. While there have been many industry wide improvements, very few companies take health issues as seriously as Traverse Flooring for the Traverse range of vinyl wood plank and tile.

Plasticizers are used in many types of flooring products to aid in the manufacturing process, and also provide flexibility to the finished product. This has many performance advantages during and after installation. Some phthalate plasticizers have come under fire (*specifically ortho-phthalates*) for health reasons and, while many have been gradually phased out over a long period, DINP was the most recent ortho-phthalate plasticizer to be added to California's Proposition 65.

Proposition 65 is a list of chemicals which the State of California believes cause cancer, birth defects or reproductive harm. DINP is still widely used in the USA and can be found in products sold in California, although products containing DINP (as with all chemicals on Proposition 65) have to be labeled with a warning label if they are to be sold in the State.

EXPOSURE TO PHTHALATES

The more volatile phthalates are released into the air we breathe. Those with a higher molecular weight (lower volatility) can still result in exposure to humans due to abrasion by foot traffic and people breathing in, or otherwise consuming, dust particles. There are several long-term studies underway to more accurately determine the long-term health consequences of exposure.



WHY TRAVERSE IS DIFFERENT

Traverse Flooring offers no opinion regarding the positives or negatives of ortho-phthalate plasticizers. Traverse, in response to trends in preferences of specifiers of and consumers of flooring, **decided several years ago to phase out all phthalate plasticizers** from the following collections: Boardwalk, Obelisk, Timeless Handscraped and Homewoods.

Therefore, all of the Traverse running line items currently marketed in North America are phthalate free and have been since early 2014 (one range in late 2012). This is achieved by a combination of not using post consumer recycled content and very close control over both the product formulation and manufacturing processes within our factories. Most manufacturers struggle with cross contamination between different products, or contamination from external recycled material sourcing. This is not a factor with Traverse.

There is one crucial piece of the contamination puzzle that Traverse overcame that will likely baffle most manufacturers for some time to come. It is proprietary information, but the test results below speak for themselves.

Test Results							
IDENTIFICATION	Composition: (parts per million, mg/kg)						
	DnHP	DnBP	BBP	DEHP	DnOP	DINP	DIDP
	1000 MAX	1000 MAX	1000 MAX	1000 MAX	1000 MAX	1000 MAX	1000 MAX
Boardwalk Obelisk / Handscraped Wear Layer	Pass	ND*	ND*	ND*	ND*	ND*	ND*
Boardwalk Obelisk/ Handscraped Backing	Pass	ND*	ND*	ND*	ND*	ND*	ND*
Homewoods Wear Layer	Pass	ND*	ND*	155	ND*	ND*	ND*
Homewoods Backing Material	Pass	ND*	ND*	90	ND*	ND*	ND*

ND* - None detected < 50 ppm

Traverse results are below the limits set by the Consumer Products Safety Commission for children's toys (CPSIA Subsection 108). **If it's safe for children's toys, it's absolutely safe for flooring!** The FDA may in the future ban phthalates from food packaging as Europe has already done. Traverse is compliant with the current European ban and could theoretically be used safely for food packaging. See www.traverseflooring.com/technical for full testing information.

ABOUT CONTAMINATION

Most vinyl luxury vinyl wood plank and tile sold in North America (by volume of square feet sold) contains varying amounts of post consumer recycled content, because it is a very low cost raw material and helps manufacturers to lower the cost of their product and therefore increase their profitability. As the source of the recycled content is hardly ever known due to it being a mix of different manufacturing sites supplying the recyclers with their material, **the recyclers are selling on raw materials that are contaminated with phthalates.**

Additionally, a manufacturer of flooring would be able to honestly - albeit misleadingly - claim to manufacture without using phthalate plasticizers in their product formulation, but then fail the tests due to their recycled content.

RELEVANT

TEST METHOD

Traverse products have been tested in accordance with CPSC-CH-C1001-09.3. This is the standard test for children's toys. For toys to be sold legally in the USA, the levels of each plasticizer listed must be below 1000 parts per million (ppm).

Traverse has had the clear vinyl wear layer and the backing material tested separately. This is designed to show that the entire product is phthalate free and show complete transparency on the part of Traverse Flooring.



TRAVERSE

PHTHALATE FREE

For a specifier or consumer interested in avoiding phthalates in LVT, Traverse is an excellent option to consider, with beautiful patterns and colors. When considering other products alongside Traverse, the solution is simple: Ask for the test results for the specific product under consideration.