

Industry delivers first pilot training to further improve the safety of PU spray foam application

According to a statement of Jörg Palmersheim, Secretary General of Isopa, the European trade association for manufacturers of aromatic diisocyanates and polyols: "Polyurethane spray foam insulation, when used correctly and as intended, poses no risk to human health and safety, and has been safely applied to over 10,000 crawl spaces annually in the Netherlands for the past 30 years."

Isopa is aware of recent health complaints in the Netherlands in the period following applications of polyurethane spray foam in some residential areas, and expresses sympathy with those who have experienced ill health. However, it is important to stress that the cause of these health complaints has not yet been determined.[image_0]

Isopa, and the polyurethanes industry, take the issues of health and safety very seriously as it is in all our interests that our product is safe to all.

Our immediate step was to engage with licensed applicators of polyurethane spray foam systems and call on them to ask customers to voluntarily leave their homes during application, just as is best practice for all construction works, until further scientific data is available. Furthermore, we at Isopa have proactively sought close contact with both Dutch authorities and other stakeholders, including the Dr. Atie Verschoor, to create an industry-initiated programme which will lead to measurable improvements in safety standards. The elements of the programme have been decided, and implementation commenced in the first quarter of 2013. Key actions supported include:

- Mandatory vacancy of homes during and shortly after licensed operators apply polyurethane spray foam in crawl spaces. The home must also remain vacant during the required ventilation period following application.
- Mandatory certification of professional polyurethane spray foam operators, including stricter safety requirements with regards to equipment and raw material handling.
- A mandatory training and inspection scheme for the safe application of polyurethane spray foam by all licensed operators.

The first pilot training, as part of our continued engagement with licensed operators, was held in the Netherlands on 6 March 2013, and addressed safe application procedures, as outlined above, as well as transport, storage, equipment and chemistry knowledge. The training, which concluded with an examination, was well received by participants, including licensed professionals from across the Netherlands. Isopa will look to further develop and integrate this comprehensive training session into its mandatory training and certification programme to be rolled out in April.

In addition to mandatory training and safety standards for applicators, a very important and new element of the programme will be improved communications with home owners, before sale of the service, and during and after the application of polyurethane spray foam by licensed operators, to ensure that all safety measures as proposed by industry and supported by other stakeholders are adhered to at every step of the application process.

As evidenced from its 'Walk the Talk' programme launched in 2006, Isopa considers information and communication to be key elements to maintaining the industry's proven health and environmental safety record. Together with the Dutch authorities and other stakeholders, Isopa will look to further improve itself as it always has and maintain the integrity of this record and the polyurethanes industry."

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