

UNDERSTANDING THE CALIFORNIA PROPOSITION 65 WARNING

A small amount of wood dust, brass, PVC or other elements on furniture and household items might seem trivial to many. The state of California, however, has taken the issue of ingredients in consumer products to a whole new level with its Safe Drinking Water and Toxic Enforcement Act, known as "Proposition 65."

Originally, the proposition was intended to protect drinking water sources from chemical contamination. Over the years, however, the scope of the law has exploded. As the Los Angeles Times wrote recently, "Warnings (about Proposition 65) are everywhere: parking lots, hardware stores, hospitals and just about any decent-sized business."

Proposition 65 requires warning labels on products that may contain any of 800-plus chemicals or ingredients that the California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA) lists as a carcinogen or a reproductive toxicant. These include wood dust, brass and a multitude of other everyday elements. A flame-retardant upholstery chemical currently required by the state of California to be added to upholstered furniture foams is now included among chemicals that require a warning under Proposition 65.

Many of the elements listed under Proposition 65 are common everyday additives

found in products such as jewelry, lamps, ceramic tableware, lead crystal glasses, electric cords, automobiles, beauty products and furniture.

Because there is always a chance that wood dust or some other of the hundreds of ingredients listed in Proposition 65 could potentially be on our furniture or packing materials, we must include Proposition 65 warnings on our products or risk large fines under this law in California. In addition, we are required to use the exact wording for this warning specified by California: "This product can expose you to chemicals including [name of California Prop 65 substance (eg Wood Dust)], which is known to the State of California to cause cancer or birth defects or other reproductive harm. For more information go to www.P65Warnings.ca.gov/furniture.