

## Supplier Partnership to Phaseout Halogenated Flame Retardants in Medical Furniture

**Environmental and Human Health Impact:** Eliminate halogenated flame retardants from the remaining 13 percent of medical furniture by 2016.

**Business Impact:** Cost neutral; no change in pricing for new furniture items that no longer contain HFR compounds.

### Challenge

Kaiser Permanente (KP) purchases medical furniture such as exam tables, chairs, and stools, and waiting room furniture from Midmark. In order to comply with the California technical bulletin (TB) 117, which requires a certain flame retardancy for upholstered furniture, Midmark, along with many other furniture manufacturers, utilized a group of chemicals known as halogenated flame retardants (HFR). HFRs are one of the groups of chemicals of concern that KP has been working diligently to eliminate from the products we buy (including electronic devices).

HFRs have been linked to a number of negative health outcomes including damage and interruption to the endocrine, reproductive, and thyroid systems and their functions. We have learned however, that chemical additives such as HFRs are not necessary to meet TB 117 and that creative product design could be employed to ensure compliance with this regulation.

### Aim/Goal

- Remove all HFRs from foam padding in medical furniture by 2016.

### Team

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Medical Core Group

Brian Kelly, VP, MedAssets

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### Actions Taken

- ✓ During the RFP process for medical furniture, the sustainability scorecard questions and flame retardant-specific questions uncovered the presence of HFRs.
- ✓ The front runner for the contract, Midmark, had the fewest number of products that contained HFRs (13 percent of their product line) and was open to discussing future HFR elimination.

- ✓ KP and our purchasing partner MedAssets worked with Midmark leadership to obtain a written agreement to eliminate the chemicals within five years (by 2016).
- ✓ The Bed & Stretcher SST agreed to the product improvement plan.

### Results

Midmark has agreed to partner with KP to convert the remaining 13 percent of products that still contain HFR compounds to non-HFR foam padding by April 2016.

Midmark Products	# of Line Items	Percent of Line Items	Total weight of foam in medical furniture in all KP facilities
Medical furniture foam with HFR compounds	5	13 percent	214 pounds
Medical furniture foam without HFR compounds	33	87 percent	1,646 pounds

In addition to Midmark phasing out HFRs, over the past few years KP has required Midmark and all other suppliers of furniture to utilize fabrics that were approved through our KP Sustainable Fabrics Alliance. The Alliance worked to minimize the presence of persistent, bio-accumulative toxins that are sometimes used as stain resistant and protective coatings on fabrics, including HFRs.

### Lessons Learned

Some suppliers are willing to commit to long-term action plans to remediate product line materials as appropriate.

### Next Steps

- ✓ Identify alternate foam padding that does not contain HFR compounds; test them for durability and strength.
- ✓ Create detailed conversion plan for specific furniture items.