



GROUP FOUR FURNITURE

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Group Four Corporate Environmental Policy

Group Four's manufacturing and purchasing policy is consistent with its concern that its products and processes should be as environmentally sensitive as current technology and our understanding of the global ecosystem allow. We are committed to this policy because we believe it is essential for a company that services the health-care market to itself function in a healthy way, because we know that this is the only cost-effective way to operate in a world with ever diminishing resources and because, like everyone else, we know we must live with the consequences of our lifestyles and we want our future children and their children to be able to enjoy the benefits of life on this planet that we have been blessed to experience.

Seating

To this end, Group Four insists that its suppliers provide only CFC free foam, produced in a fashion that reduces the volatile organic compounds released into the atmosphere. All foam used by Group Four is chemically inert by the time it is received, and there are no discharges during our upholstering operation or, later, at the customer's premises.

Our powder epoxy coating results in minimal discharge to the environment because the powder is electrostatically charged, resulting in strong attraction to the substrate it is being applied to. The minimal amount of overspray is recovered by filters within the spray booth. The powder itself is one of the few materials used by Group Four in its manufacturing process that is not in a finished state, requiring spray application and oven baking, but after curing it is inert. For the protection of those working with the powder, protective breathing apparatus is supplied and must be used.

All other materials and components used in the production of seating are received by Group Four in a finished, inert state, including steel tubing for frames and flat steel components for mounting brackets, upholstery coverings, thread, twill tape for seam backing, zippers, glides and assembly hardware.



Tables

Group Four's table tops are also produced with materials and methods designed to minimize the impact on the environment. The plastic laminates, particle board core and pvc (polyvinylchloride) edging are in a finished state when received, requiring only cutting to size and bonding (gluing) to result in a finished table top. The particle board uses urea formaldehyde resin as a bonding agent, as an integral part of the board. It is used by all twelve Canadian companies who produce particleboard, which is the substrate of choice for virtually all table tops produced (as well as for many other uses). The dust generated by the cutting is collected for recycling and studies indicate the exposure of those working with the material is well within accepted guidelines. The glue used for bonding the laminate to the particle board core is a vinyl polymer emulsion which requires no respiratory protection during application, although impermeable gloves and safety goggles are recommended for obvious reasons.

Once the table top is complete, with the plastic laminate bonded to the surface and the backing sheet to the underside, and the pvc extrusion surrounding the edge, the finished product has only inert surfaces sealing the particle board and the glue inside. No chemicals can then be emitted, and the fire resistance of the plastic laminate will prevent flame from reaching the particle board core.

Group Four does offer real wood in the form of solid wood edging and veneer table surfaces, but no exotic or endangered species are made available.

General

The furniture we produce and the materials and methods we use are the major contributions that we make to protecting the environment, but our corporate philosophy is also reflected in many smaller things we practice - our office paper waste is all recycled, the newspapers that come in each day and the bottles and cans that are used in the lunchroom are collected and taken home for the Blue Box program, we minimize the consumption of electricity by turning off the lights in the showroom when it is not in use, and the energy we use to heat our facility and fire the oven that is used to cure the powder epoxy is supplied by clean, low-cost natural gas. These may be matters of corporate policy or just personal conviction, but they are part of a commitment that we hope contributes to a better environment.

Conclusion

Group Four's material choices and product range make a policy of environmental sensitivity easy to apply, but we continue to explore materials and means to further improve our stewardship in any way we can.