

Hot News: Phasing Out PFOA

By Lisa Arrigo, Editor-in-Chief

In a recent teleconference with key members of the press, DuPont executives talked about the breakthrough the company is making in developing high-performance products with reduced perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) content.

John Moriarty, global market and business director, DuPont Chemical Solutions Enterprise, said the company has successfully commercialized a new, patented manufacturing process to remove greater than 97 percent of trace levels of PFOA, its homologues, and direct precursors from its fluorotelomer products. This milestone underscores the company's emphasis on sustainability and meets the voluntary EPA 2010/15 PFOA Stewardship program's goal for these trace levels three years ahead of schedule.

"World class science, superior performing products, and a commitment to sustainability are the driving forces behind our new LX Platform products," said Moriarty when announcing the product line's rollout, which has begun this quarter and will proceed throughout the year. LX Platform products are expected to be priced in the same range as current offerings; however, the company believes customers may notice better runability as a result of further refining.

DuPont invested \$20 million with subsidiary First Chemical to remove the impurities from its fluorotelomer products and create LX Platform products. Although PFOA is not used to make fluorotelomers, PFOA is found at trace levels as an unintended byproduct of the manufacturing process. The LX Platform technology was developed to address these byproducts. Henry Bryndza, the company's technology director, explained: "Our investment in First Chemical clearly demonstrates that we are committed to making fluorotelomer products and minimizing our environmental footprint through scientific innovation and unceasing product improvement."

LX Platform products, marketed as drop-in replacements for the company's current products, will not require regulatory re-qualification and will continue to be listed on existing global regulatory clearances. Based on existing Teflon, Zonyl, and Foraperle chemistries, they will be used to make surface-protection products such as coatings for paper packaging, fluorosurfactants in paints and coatings, coatings for carpeting, finishes for non-wovens, and coatings for stone and tile as well as surface-protection products used in leather drum tanning and spray coating applications.

Equally important during the teleconference was a discussion about the company's commitment to eliminate the need to make, buy, or use PFOA by 2015. The company has been manufacturing and using PFOA as a processing aid to produce a different family of products called fluoropolymers. In its fluoropolymer products, DuPont has reduced PFOA content in aqueous dispersion products using new Echelon technology. With Echelon, PFOA content in converted products has been reduced by at least 97 percent. The technology will be used for durable coatings in applications such as electronics, industrial, architectural, and consumer products.

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Executives also pointed out that ongoing manufacturing modifications have resulted in DuPont's ability to continue to aggressively reduce PFOA emissions to the environment. DuPont achieved a 94 percent reduction in global manufacturing emissions by the end of 2006. The company projects that it will achieve reductions of 97 percent by the end of 2007.

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