# Who's made the blowing-agent conversion?

by **Mark S. Graham**

Dec. 31 marks a significant milestone for polyisocyanurate insulation manufacturers—they must convert to third-generation blowing agents for their polyisocyanurate products. If you are involved in specifying, purchasing or installing rigid board polyisocyanurate roof insulation, you need to be aware of the changes.

Citing concerns with the ozone-depleting potential of certain chemicals, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) mandated reductions in the use of a number of chemicals. Such a mandate was the primary reason for polyisocyanurate insulation manufacturers to change the blowing agent (a raw material component used when manufacturing polyisocyanurate insulation) from chlorofluorocarbon to hydrochlorofluorocarbon (HCFC-141b) during the early 1990s.

Polyisocyanurate insulation manufacturers now face an additional EPA-mandated deadline. After Dec. 31, chemical manufacturers no longer will be permitted to produce HCFC-141b. As a result, polyisocyanurate insulation manufacturers again are forced to change a critical component in the manufacturing of polyisocyanurate insulation.

**Polyisocyanurate insulation manufacturers' conversions**

| Manufacturer | Plant location | Conversion date |
|---|---|---|
| Atlas Roofing Corp. | Camp Hill, Pa. | March 2002 |
| | Denver | December 2002 |
| | Diaboll, Texas | September 2002 |
| | East Moline, Ill. | January 2001 |
| | Etobicoke, Ontario, Canada | June 1999 |
| | LaGrange, Ga. | August 1998 |
| | Mesa, Ariz. | Early 2003 |
| Dow Building Materials | Elizabethtown, Ky. | First quarter 2003 |
| | Tracy, Calif. | First quarter 2003 |
| Firestone Building Products | Covington, Ky. | June 2002 |
| | Deforest, Wis. | December 2002 |
| | Denver | December 2002 |
| | Irving, Texas | Pending |
| | Jacksonville, Fla. | March 2000 |
| | Youngwood, Pa. | August 2002 |
| | Bristol, Conn. | First quarter 2002 |
| | Salt Lake City | October 2001 |
| Hunter Panels | Franklin Park, Ill. | December 2002 |
| | Kingston, N.Y. | October 2002 |
| IKO Manufacturing Inc. | Brampton, Ontario, Canada | October 1999 |
| Johns Manville Roofing Systems | Bremen, Ind. | July 2002 |
| | Cornwall, Ontario, Canada | April 2001 |
| | Fernley, Nev. | First quarter 2003 |
| | Hazelton, Pa. | September 2002 |
| | Jacksonville | June 2002 |
| Rmax Inc. | Dallas | December 2002 |
| | Fernley | December 2002 |
| | Greer, S.C. | December 2002 |

*Plant-by-plant statuses of polyisocyanurate insulation manufacturers' conversions to alternative blowing agents and third-generation polyisocyanurate insulation products*

## Manufacturers' statuses

Although polyisocyanurate insulation manufacturers have known about the deadline for some time, development of alternative blowing agents—and the resulting third-generation products—has been relatively slow.

In October, NRCA contacted polyisocyanurate insulation manufacturers to inquire about their conversion statuses and determine the presence of third-generation polyisocyanurate insulation products in the marketplace.

When evaluating the survey results (shown in the figure), realize that the plants that will not be converted by the deadline are not necessarily violating EPA's mandate. The mandate specifically restricts the manufacture of HCFC-141b, not its use in finished products.

## Closing thoughts

Be aware of the statuses of manufacturers' conversions to third-generation products. Also, realize the physical properties and performance attributes of third-generation polyisocyanurate insulation products will not necessarily be identical to second-generation polyisocyanurate insulation products.

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