



The Facts about Tylenol Recall and Relationship to Wood Pallets

In November 2009, McNeil Consumer Healthcare, a subsidiary of Johnson & Johnson, announced a voluntary recall of 5 lots of TYLENOL® Arthritis Pain Caplet 100 count due to consumer reports of an unusual moldy, musty, or mildew-like odor that was associated with nausea, stomach pain, vomiting and diarrhea. In December, the drug company in consultation with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), expanded the recall to include all lot numbers of that drug.

The smell was traced to a chemical called 2,4,6-tribromoanisole. It is the drug company's conjecture that the source is a result of a breakdown of a chemical used to treat wooden pallets.

The release of McNeil's recall statement has raised alarm among other pharmaceutical corporations and food companies with regard to the safe use of wood pallets.

Do U.S. wood pallet manufacturers and recyclers use TBA or tribromophenol (TBP)?

The candid answer is **NO**.

Here are the facts:

- TBP is a wood preservative used by some countries to control insects, fungi and bacteria in lumber, engineered wood (e.g. plywood), posts and utility poles. It is soluble in acetone, diethylether benzene, toluence, alcohol, petroleum distillates, etc. TBP is water insoluble but it is converted into its sodium salt in order to be used in water systems.
- TBP appears as white to off-white crystalline flakes with phenolic odor. It can be applied by pressure and vacuum impregnation, dipping, brushing or spraying.
- TBP is not a registered pesticide with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Therefore, it is not legal for sale or use in the United States (it is also banned in Europe). The chemical is not recognized as a wood preservative by the American Wood Protection Association (AWPA). U.S. wood treatment facilities do not use this fungicide.
- TBA and TBP are not fumigants and not related to methyl bromide. Wood packaging products that are properly fumigated with methyl bromide do not have residue. The same is true for heat treated pallets.
- NWPCA has talked with technical personnel at U.S. companies producing other fungicides such as Timbor and X mold products that are approved for use in America. Timbor is an inorganic compound.

What this means to you:

To our knowledge, this is the first time an incident related to wood packaging and TBA has occurred in the U.S. since the American wood industry, and our major trading partner Europe, does not use the chemical. Other countries allow the chemicals' usage.

Despite the fact that this is an anomalous incident, pallet users are alarmed and are calling NWPCA and pallet companies for assurance that U.S. wood pallets are safe. Unfortunately, plastic pallet providers are working to provoke fears that are largely ungrounded. But the plastic pallet industry has been hard hit by both lawmakers and regulators who have taken steps to ban the hazardous chemical fire retardant, decabromodiphenyl ether (deca-bromine) used in large quantities in millions of plastic pallets. They are desperate to deflect customer attention – particularly that of food and drug producers – away from the very real hazards inherent in their product.

As a result of the Tylenol recall, some pallet users, most notably some pharmaceutical companies, are now asking for self-certification from pallet vendors/suppliers stating they are using wood/raw materials that are TBP-free and are not sourced from South America.

NWPCA has met with staff at Johnson & Johnson to discuss solutions. All are confident we can create a process that will maintain safety, efficiency and cost effectiveness in the U.S. supply chain.

**If you have any questions, please contact
Conner Industries at 800-413-8006, please ask
for sales.**

Thank you!