

FLOORING FIRM WON'T REUSE PVC

Lumber Liquidators says it will stop using recycled polyvinyl chloride in its flooring products as part of an agreement with the advocacy group Safer Chemicals, Healthy Families. The recycled material, present in vinyl flooring, can contain lead, cadmium, brominated flame retardants, phthalates, and other undesirable chemicals. The contaminants enter the recycle stream from PVC stripped from discarded wires and cables. Safer Chemicals says testing found 69% of the floors' inner layers contained elevated concentrations of heavy metals; samples showed lead content as high as 10,000 ppm and cadmium at 20,000 ppm. This year, the European vinyl industry will complete a voluntary phaseout of lead stabilizers, which are being replaced with calcium-based additives. Another group, Healthy Building Network, says future sources of used PVC may be better for recycling. "Many manufacturers are moving away from lead and cadmium stabilizers and phthalate plasticizers in new products, and those should be preferred because they reduce exposure to toxicants, as well as provide a cleaner feedstock for future materials recycling," a report from the group says.—MMB