



Spec Guidance

The Healthy Building Network provides recommendations for the specification of healthier products in the HomeFree initiative's seven primary product categories. Summarized below, these recommendations are intended as a resource for those selecting and specifying healthier products, and can be used by all members of a project team as a supplement to the more detailed information found on the product tab of the HomeFree website.

GENERAL

In addition to the recommendations on the product categories specified below, HBN encourages the following general practices:

- Include a requirement in your specifications that contractors and subcontractors review [HomeFree](#).
- Ask for and prefer products that have a [Health Product Declaration \(HPD\)](#).
- Avoid products marketed as [antimicrobial](#) and claiming or implying a health benefit.

FLOORING

- Prefer non-vinyl flooring products.
- When vinyl is used: Specify phthalate-free; avoid post-consumer recycled content.
- For rubber flooring: Avoid post-consumer recycled content (crumb rubber).
- For carpets: Look for products that don't use fluorinated stain-repellent treatments; specify backings that are vinyl-free and polyurethane-free and do not contain fly ash.
- For ceramic tiles, prefer those made in the USA where most manufacturers have eliminated toxic lead compounds from ceramic tile glazes. Avoid post-consumer recycled content from CRTs (cathode ray tubes) which contain high concentrations of lead.

PAINT

- Prefer paints that meet the Green Seal-11 (GS-11) standard from 2010 or later whenever possible or specify paints known to be free of alkylphenol ethoxylates (APEs).
- Specify bases with 10 g/L of VOCs or less and colorants that do not increase the overall VOC content.
- At a minimum, specify paint bases and colorants with a VOC content of 50g/L or less.
- Look for paints that have VOC emission testing and meet the requirements of the CDPH (California Department of Public Health) Standard Method for Testing VOC Emissions (01350).

DRYWALL

- Specify boards made with natural gypsum.
- If possible, avoid pre-consumer recycled content (also known as synthetic gypsum or FGD) to avoid the release of mercury in manufacture.

INSULATION

- Specify residential fiber glass batt insulation -- it has been reformulated to be free of formaldehyde -- or formaldehyde-free mineral wool batts. Unfaced batts are most preferable.
- For blown insulation, prefer cellulose or unbonded fiber glass.
- Consider alternatives to rigid board insulation whenever possible. If board insulation is required, specify mineral wool boards and look for those that meet the requirements of CDPH (California Department of Public Health) Standard Method for Testing VOC Emissions (01350) for residential scenarios. If plastic foam insulation is used, look for those that are halogen-free. Consider upgrading to expanded cork insulation.
- Avoid spray polyurethane foam (SPF) insulation whenever possible.
- For sealing applications, prefer caulking or sealant tapes to spray foams.



COUNTERTOPS

- Think of countertops as a system of products: the surface itself, an adhesive, and potentially a surface treatment, which may need to be reapplied regularly. Each of these elements have different health concerns.
- Sealant products can introduce hazardous chemicals. Specify countertops that do not need to be sealed after installation, such as engineered stone, cultured marble, or solid surfacing.
- Plastic laminate is not a top countertop choice, but if used, specify that the substrate be made with NAF (No Added Formaldehyde) or ULEF (Ultra Low Emitting Formaldehyde) resins.

CABINETRY & MILLWORK

- Prefer solid wood products over composite.
- When using composite wood, specify materials that are NAF (No Added Formaldehyde) or ULEF (Ultra Low Emitting Formaldehyde) whenever possible.
- Prefer products that are factory-finished.
- For edge-banding, specify products with veneer rather than vinyl.

DOORS

- Prefer solid wood products over composite.
- When using composite wood, specify materials that are NAF (No Added Formaldehyde) or ULEF (Ultra Low Emitting Formaldehyde) whenever possible.
- Prefer products that are factory-finished.
- For edge-banding, specify products with veneer rather than vinyl.

Refer to the HomeFree site for additional information - <https://homefree.healthybuilding.net>