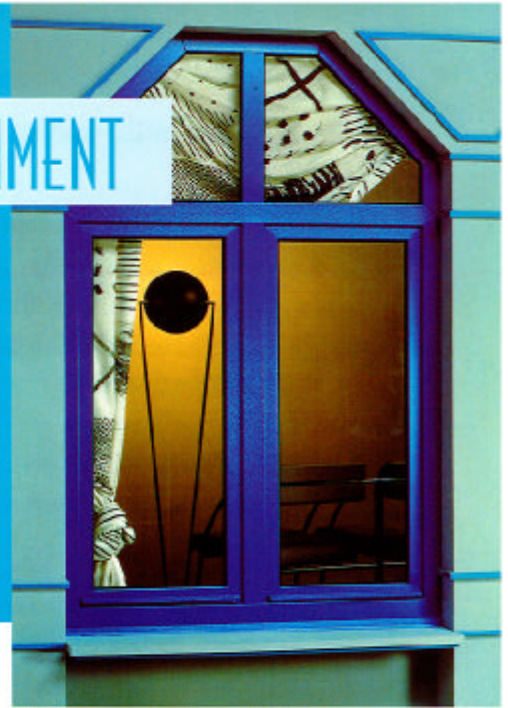


BRIEFING
NOTE :

PVC-U WINDOWS & THE ENVIRONMENT

the facts
are clear
to see



The Facts about PVC-U Windows and the Environment

“ If you have heard stories about PVC and the environment which have caused you concern, then you should read the facts: ”

- ✓ PVC is one of the world's oldest plastics and has evolved since the 1940s to become a universally used, cost effective, adaptable, safe and environmentally efficient material.
- ✓ As a European industry, PVC manufacturers have signed a European Industry Charter, committing to even higher standards of environmental management.
- ✓ The Oslo Paris Convention on the Prevention of Pollution to the North East Atlantic effectively validated the production of PVC, on environmental grounds, by issuing a Recommendation for PVC production, based on the best techniques currently practised.
- ✓ The PVC industry is not responsible for dioxin levels in the environment which arise from many sources. Independent studies from the UK, and around the world, have clearly demonstrated that any focus on PVC as a health risk is unjustified.
- ✓ PVC utilises advanced technology to increase its toughness and durability throughout its service life. This can involve the incorporation of certain metal compounds such as those based on lead or tin. However, the use of these additives does not represent any risk of damage to human health or the environment, as the substances are locked into the polymer matrix.
- ✓ PVC is often recycled but PVC-U (unplasticised) products, such as windows and pipes, last so long there simply isn't enough used material yet for cost-effective recovery and recycling processes to operate in the UK. However, the recycling technology is well proven. Factory scrap can be recycled back into the manufacturing process or used to supply other PVC users, thus diverting material from landfill.
- ✓ Independent scientific reviews and surveys have shown that it is safe to incinerate all plastics including PVC in modern, well-managed incineration facilities.
- ✓ There is no evidence to suggest that disposal of PVC in landfill leads to any specific problems.
- ✓ PVC-U windows have an expected service life of at least 40 years. They require very little or no maintenance, except for occasional cleaning. They do not warp, rot or peel and they do not require preservatives or painting.
- ✓ PVC-U windows account for some 90% of the replacement window market, which clearly demonstrates the consumer acceptance and proven cost-effectiveness enjoyed by PVC-U window systems.

Is Timber an environmentally superior material?

Any assessment of the environmental performance of PVC-U windows inevitably implies a similar consideration of competing materials. As PVC-U's main competitor in the windows market, the timber industry has been quick to criticise PVC-U. However, environmental campaigners have themselves criticised the timber industry's own environmental credentials. For example, Friends of the Earth state that:

- The [timber] industry does not have adequate evidence to substantiate its claims that timber is, overall, better for the environment than any other material;
- The timber industry's forest management practices (including tree planting) can damage the environment;
- The temperate and boreal forests of the world are far from being sustainably managed;
- Logging for timber is causing deforestation;
- The timber industry does not have adequate evidence to show that it is helping to meet the threat of climate change, and it may even be adding to the problem. ”



What do others think about the environmental performance of PVC?

A range of independent assessments have now been completed to evaluate adverse environmental claims being made about PVC. They have demonstrated that PVC-U is environmentally acceptable when compared to competing materials. These include:

Swiss Institute for Testing Materials
The Dutch Foundation for Building Research
National Centre for Business and Ecology
Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation
German Council of Environmental Advisors

The UK PVC industry welcomes such balanced, independent studies as a major contribution to an informed scientific debate which, unfortunately, has so often been characterised by emotional arguments and ill-informed hype from PVC's critics. Studies like these show that calls to boycott or prohibit the use of PVC-U for window applications are totally unjustified. When the scientific evidence is assessed and the claims made against PVC are scrutinised, the conclusion that so many independent authorities have reached is that

**PVC is safe in
manufacture,
use and disposal**



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