

Real Wood Reduces Toxin Risks During Fires

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PITTSBURGH, PA, UNITED STATES, May 20, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- In response to the devastating fires in California earlier this year, the hardwood industry is rallying to educate consumers about the benefits of real wood products over plastic look-alikes. The fires, which affected areas from San Diego to Los Angeles, destroyed more than 18,000 homes and structures. The use of plastic products in these buildings contributed to the devastation.



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"It is a well-known fact among fire fighters that the use of plastic products in homes and businesses makes fires more difficult to fight," says Paul Hoffeditz, former Battalion Chief at the Rock Island Fire Department in Rock Island, Illinois. "We often encounter things like PVC pipes and luxury vinyl floors in newer construction. Unfortunately, products like these burn faster and hotter than those made using natural materials like real wood. This means we often can't save the building, because when you're fighting a fire, minutes count."

Often, even structures that can be saved are uninhabitable due to the toxic chemicals released from burning plastics. "More and more plastics and vinyls are being used in furniture, flooring, trim, and countertops," says Hoffeditz, "all of which release hydrogen cyanide when they burn. This is a highly toxic chemical." In fact, the World Health Organization reports that an airborne hydrogen cyanide concentration of 300 mg/m³ will kill a human within about 10 minutes, so even short exposure is extremely dangerous.

One solution, says Hoffeditz, is to use real wood products instead of plastic. "There's a pretty well-known video produced that shows a side-by-side comparison of identical rooms burning.* One is made using synthetic materials like plastics, and one is made using natural materials like

real wood. The room made using plastic materials burns in less than five minutes. The room made using natural materials takes more than 30 minutes to burn. Clearly, the natural products give your family more time to reach safety, and give fire fighters more time to save your home.”

There also is the environmental issue to consider. In 2018, in response to a viral video of a plastic straw being removed from a sea turtle’s nose, plastic straws were banned in communities throughout the world. Experts estimate that 500 million single-use plastic straws are used every day, making up a sizable portion of the plastic products thrown away on a daily basis.

By comparison, in 2024, 5.8 billion square feet of plastic flooring was sold. A little simple math reveals that equates to 15.9 million square feet per day. And since most plastic flooring has a warranty of only 5-10 years, and most cannot be recycled, that translates to a lot of plastic straws. A lot. In fact, just 1,000 square feet of luxury vinyl tile equates to about 570,000 plastic straws. At 15.9 million square feet daily, that equates to more than 9 billion plastic straws each and every day.

“Real American Hardwood products are safe for humans and the environment,” says Ian Faight with the [American Hardwood Information Center](#), “even when they burn. In fact, American hardwoods are used as a heating and cooking source throughout the world, so it’s safe to say that burning hardwood is a part of our everyday life.”

Real wood products also have the added benefit of being an environmentally friendly material. “Trees take in carbon dioxide during their growth cycle and produce oxygen,” says Anita Howard with the [National Wood Flooring Association](#). “What’s even more impressive, though, is that the products made using real wood continue to store carbon throughout their entire service life. Your wood dining room table, your wood floors, even your wood framed artwork have a great environmental story to tell that no plastic product could ever match.”

Learn more about how real wood products are the responsible choice for your family’s health, and the health of our planet, by visiting www.realamericanhardwood.com.

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