

Alkylphenols & Ethoxylates Research Council

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Alkylphenols & Ethoxylates Research Council Statement on Greenpeace Dirty Laundry Campaign

September 12, 2011 – The Alkylphenols & Ethoxylates Research Council (APERC) believes that the public has a right to know that two “Dirty Laundry” reports recently released by the activist organization Greenpeace include serious mischaracterizations and factually incorrect statements about the hazards of nonylphenol ethoxylates (NPEs) and compounds, like nonylphenol (NP), that form as intermediates during their breakdown in the environment.

Greenpeace is utilizing two “Dirty Laundry” reports to promote a “champions for a toxic-free future” campaign and is calling on various textile and brand name apparel suppliers to take a pledge of “zero discharge” to eliminate “all releases of hazardous chemicals from their supply chains and their products”. APERC supports the responsible management of chemicals throughout the supply chain to protect the health of workers; to promote the responsible treatment and discharge of chemicals to the environment; and to ensure the safety of products to the final consumer. However, APERC does not support the use of misinformation to coerce companies to deselect specific chemicals. In addition, APERC does not support the Greenpeace “zero discharge” philosophy, which hinges on the misperception that it is impossible to define safe levels for many hazardous pollutants. In the case of NPE and NP, safe levels for humans, fish and other aquatic species have been established in several governmental assessments based on an abundant and robust set of toxicology studies.

With an understanding of these safe levels, the data presented in the “Dirty Laundry 2” report about residual levels of NPE found on clothing does not provides any basis for concern about the safety of people wearing the clothing. In fact, even Greenpeace acknowledges that “levels of NPEs detected in all articles are not known to constitute any direct health risk to the wearers of the clothing”.

Also, various governments have established water quality criteria, which are concentrations of NP and NPE that are protective of aquatic species in surface water, such as rivers that receive effluent from textile mills. While all the concentrations of NP and NPE found in Chinese textile plant effluent were very low (in the low parts per

billion range), two samples taken directly from the discharge pipe of textile processing plants contained levels of NP that exceed governmental water quality criteria for this compound. It is important to note however, that these governmental criteria are applicable to concentrations in receiving water, not at the end of a discharge pipe. The Greenpeace report does not provide data on NP in the receiving rivers; therefore it is not clear whether concentrations in those rivers exceed recommended criteria for NP.

Of great concern to APERC is the mischaracterization of the hazards of NPE and NP in the two “Dirty Laundry” reports. NP/NPE are NOT classified as persistent or bioaccumulative. They do NOT biomagnify in the food chain. The NPEs used in textile applications are NOT estrogenically active. While NP is weakly estrogenic it is one thousand to one million times less potent than the estrogens found naturally in humans and other species. Finally, NP/NPE are highly treatable with standard secondary wastewater treatment technologies and levels detected in the Chinese textile effluent appear to indicate good removal in those facilities.

It is APERC’s view that the weight of the scientific evidence for alkylphenols and their ethoxylates continues to support their human and environmental safety when used as intended and disposed of responsibly.

The mission of the Alkylphenols & Ethoxylates Research Council, which is composed of manufacturers, processors and raw material suppliers of alkylphenols (AP) and alkylphenol derivatives (e.g., alkylphenol ethoxylates (APE)), is to promote the safe use of AP and AP derivatives through research and outreach within the framework of responsible chemical management. For more information about AP and APE go to www.aperc.org.