

Fact Sheet:

Final Report on Formaldehyde Levels in FEMA-Supplied Travel Trailers, Park Models, and Mobile Homes

Why did CDC do this study?

CDC wanted to find out the formaldehyde levels in occupied FEMA-supplied trailers and mobile homes and what things about those trailers and mobile homes could affect formaldehyde levels. We also wanted to help FEMA decide when and how to move residents out of these trailers and mobile homes in the Gulf Coast area.

How did CDC do the study?

We took an indoor air sample for one full hour, and measured indoor temperature and relative humidity. We also asked adult residents about themselves, what they did in the trailers and mobile homes and about their trailer or mobile home, to learn about other things that could affect formaldehyde levels. Finally, we walked through each trailer or mobile home to look for anything else that could affect formaldehyde levels inside.

What did CDC find?

In many trailers and mobile homes formaldehyde levels were higher than usual in indoor air in most homes in the United States. Average levels of formaldehyde in all travel trailers and mobile homes were about 77 parts per billion (ppb).

Formaldehyde levels were different in different types of mobile homes and travel trailers, but all types tested had some high levels. At levels found in some trailers and mobile homes, formaldehyde exposure could affect health. Travel trailers had significantly higher average formaldehyde levels than mobile homes.

CDC also found that temperature, humidity, trailer type and brand, keeping windows open, and mold affected formaldehyde levels.

What does this mean?

This study looked only at current formaldehyde levels in the occupied trailers and mobile homes. Our study was done in the winter months of December 2007 through January 2008, when people had already lived in the trailers and mobile homes for two years. The formaldehyde level was probably higher in newer trailers and mobile homes and when the weather was warmer.

Based on what we found and on scientific reports about health effects linked with formaldehyde exposure, CDC recommended that FEMA move residents of the Gulf Coast area displaced by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita out of travel trailers and mobile homes. We recommended that people with symptoms that could be linked to formaldehyde and vulnerable populations such as children, elderly, and individuals with chronic diseases be moved first.

What should families do?

Families who live in travel trailers and mobile homes should

- spend as much time outdoors in fresh air as they can, especially if the family includes children, elderly people, or those with chronic diseases such as asthma;
- open windows as much as they can to let in fresh air;
- try to keep the temperature indoors at the lowest comfortable setting;
- not smoke, especially indoors; and
- see a doctor or another medical professional if they have health concerns.



CDC is a federal public health agency under the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.



FEMA