

The use of cadmium and its disposal has come into question in American industries. Cadmium-containing chemicals have been used in the production of vinyl wallcoverings for many years, both as a heat stabilizer and as a color pigment. They performed well in both of these applications and were effective in meeting the market needs.

The restrictions on use in Europe and Japan, and the growing discussion in the United States on the hazards associated with its use, were of concern. The cadmium used in vinyl wallcoverings was bound, and leaching studies showed that it was not a problem in landfills. Korographics® Digital Wallcoverings (the “wallcoverings”) remained concerned about future findings and unknown future regulatory actions. We, therefore, met with our raw material suppliers to develop replacement materials that would be cadmium-free and still meet product requirements.

This required extensive research and development trials to arrive at a cadmium-free heat stabilizer which could deal with the high processing heats, hold the film’s color, and not interfere with the printability of the film. We were successful, and cadmium was replaced in all heat stabilizers used in the Wallcoverings. The next step was to find the color pigments which could be used to arrive at the colors needed without the use of the cadmium compounds. This required the matching of formulations to arrive at the same color specified. This project was completed, and all cadmium containing color pigments were eliminated from use in the Wallcoverings.

We at RJF International are committed to being environmentally proactive for the good of our customers.

Questions and Answers:

- Q.** What are the hazards with products containing cadmium?
- A.** NIOSH has concluded that cadmium is possibly a human carcinogen and has recommended that exposure be controlled to the lowest level feasible.
- Q.** Does elimination of cadmium adversely effect the performance of wallcoverings?
- A.** No. After extensive efforts, we were able to develop with our suppliers alternates, which performed as well as the cadmium containing products.
- Q.** Was it more expensive to go to products without cadmium?
- A.** Yes. The cost of the raw materials without cadmium is more expensive than those with cadmium. Environmental concerns outweighed the economics of its contained use.