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New U.S. Environmental Regulations Could Affect EU Products

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Across the European Community, politicians and business people are working to help European businesses become more competitive in world markets. However, recent environmental legislation in the U.S. could reach across the Atlantic and stifle the demand for EC-manufactured products. This new legislation becomes effective on May 15, 1993.

The issue stems from Section 611 of the U.S. 1990 Clean Air Act which stipulates new warning labels on [ozone-depleting materials](#). The first and least onerous requirement stipulates that all ozone-depleting materials must bear labels on the containers which clarify the environmental impact of the chemical.

The second requirement may be more troublesome for companies still using Class I ozone-depleting materials (mainly CFCs and 1,1,1-trichloroethane) on products to be exported to the U.S. The legislation stipulates that those finished products must have environmental warning labels on the main display panel of the product or package. The wording of this label is specified in the law, and requires the manufacturer to explicitly confess that ozone-damaging materials were used.

The unique twist to this legislation is that environmentally "clean" products can be "infected" by subcontractors. If a personal computer, for example, contains a disk drive that contains a controller board that contains a capacitor which was cleaned with a Class I ozone depleting material, then the entire computer is infected and must carry the environmental warning label. This applies even if the component was produced outside of the U.S. away from the direct scope of the legislation.

It is the opinion of the authors that very, very few products would be able to withstand the market's negative reaction such labels would engender. Most large U.S. firms agree, and major programs currently are in place at Motorola, AT&T, Hewlett-Packard, IBM and many other companies to completely eliminate ozone depleting materials from their plants and their subcontractors. If companies plan to export to the U.S., then they should plan to either be ozone-safe or be prepared to suffer the negative consequences of the warning labels.

Related Information:

- For additional information about the ozone-safe DuPont HFC solvents, check out the [Vertrel® solvents web site](#).
- For other information about the Bromothane™ brand of nPB solvents, check out the [Bromothane™ web site](#).
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