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Founded in 1902

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Office of the Secretary  
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**Re: Proposed, Revised Green Guides, 16 CFR Part 260,  
Project No. P954501**

Ladies and Gentlemen:

We offer the following comments on the FTC's Guides for Use of Environmental Marketing Claims ("Green Guides").

Three of USG Corporation's major subsidiaries, United States Gypsum Company, USG Interiors, Inc. and L&W Supply Corporation, manufacture and distribute building materials throughout the United States. USG was a founding member of the U.S. Green Building Council. We convey substantial information about the environmental impacts of our products in many different ways. One portal is our EcoBlueprint™ page at [www.usg.com](http://www.usg.com). USG Design Studio and individual product pages also feature this information. We also publish Sustainability Tables which capture selected attributes of all of our major products. We have prepared Life Cycle analyses (LCA's) of many of our wallboard and ceilings products and LCA's are in progress for our other products lines.

First, we encourage the FTC to expand the scope, specificity and authority of the Green Guides. As other commenters have pointed out, the Green Guides have been influential and helpful both in guiding companies about formulating claims for their products and in aiding judges and arbitrators to adjudicate false advertising claims.

Second, we urge the FTC to reconsider its decision not to offer any further guidance on lifecycle analysis (“LCA”). A central concern that prompted the FTC to revise the Green Guides was evidence that consumers misinterpret general environmental claims or interpret a particular attribute claim to mean that a product has general environmental benefits. Correspondingly, the FTC explains at length what sorts of qualifications need to be made with respect to general environmental claims. Many of these concerns would be alleviated if manufacturers offered LCA data. We use the term LCA in the broader, more disciplined sense of a technique to assess all environmental impacts associated with a production process starting from raw materials through transport, processing, manufacture, distribution, use, repair, maintenance disposal or recycling.

The FTC states “it lacks sufficient information on which to base guidance,” about LCA’s but we respectfully suggest there is now more than enough information for the FTC to weigh in and offer guidance. Several standard LCA methodologies are now

available and substantial databases have been developed. Many companies now have experience in preparing LCA's. Competent consultants are widely used to assist in the process of gathering, submitting and evaluating information for LCA's.

The FTC noted that several other commenters asserted that LCA should be regarded "as a decision making tool to help improve environmental outcomes rather than as a marketing claim." We don't think this is an "either/or" choice. LCA does have substantial value to a manufacturer in helping to "improve environmental outcomes" by identifying and measuring impacts up and down the distribution chain that could be mitigated. The education continues when a manufacturer sees its competitors' LCA's which often suggest further areas of improvement. However, LCA's also have value as a marketing claim, and as substantive validation of general environmental or single-attribute claims. Our customers, especially design professionals and other specifiers, trust and rely on LCA information to advise owners on choices of true environmentally-friendly building materials and systems.

Another commenter stated it would support the use of a standardized label conveying the results of an LCA to consumers similar to the Food and Drug Administration Nutrition Facts label. USG doesn't believe that would be practical. The product label itself will always be highly compressed and abstracted but we believe the label is far less likely to mislead consumers if the full LCA information is also available.

In fact, companies will feel much freer to point out particular attributes where their products have strengths if “the rest of the story” is also available in an LCA format.

The FTC and other commenters have noted that there are competing LCA methodologies, that the process is expensive and time consuming, that it may not be available for many types of products, that databases are still incomplete and that the entire process is not understood by all consumers. All of these are true to some extent but, on the other hand, LCA is currently the most effective way for manufacturers to convey a very complex set of information and data. The LCA methodologies will become more standardized, databases will be expanded and standardized and consumers will become more knowledgeable. However, the whole process will be hastened and improved with active and strong encouragement from the FTC.

The FTC also comments that the slim available empirical evidence suggests that a very small percentage of consumers thought about “green claims” as applied to each of the various stages of a product’s life cycle (production, transportation, use, disposal, etc.). The problem may not be as great as the FTC suggests. With respect to building materials, a major challenge is to enable the consumer to distinguish the manufacturing impacts when the materials are produced from impacts in the built environment where the materials are used. However, many companies have met this challenge successfully. We cite the example of fiberglass insulation (a product not made by USG). Viewed only in the context of its manufacturing environment, insulation appears

to be an energy and materials intensive product. However, when viewed in the context of its use where it allows the building to reduce energy consumption by HVAC systems substantially and over the course of decades, insulation is a hugely successful “eco-friendly” and “green” product. LCA will promote similar discussions including extending the analysis upstream to vendors and downstream to disposal/recycling.

There are always challenges (for example, see the decades’ old FTC rules on the proper way to market R-values for home insulation products) but these can be addressed and they do not offset the substantial benefits that LCA offers: a comprehensive, detailed and fact-based context against which to make specific environmental claims.

Very truly yours,

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