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NCA Interpretation of Volatile Organic Chemical (VOC) Regulations and Candles

The State of California, the U.S. Federal government and several other states have regulations on the amount of Volatile Organic Chemicals (VOCs) that may be present in consumer products. These regulations are very complex and often misinterpreted. NCA would like to clarify the current VOC regulations regarding candles.

Are Candles regulated under any VOC regulations in the U.S.?

No. Candles fall outside of the scope of these regulations, so there are no VOC limits for candles or the fragrances they contain. California sets the recognized standard for VOC regulations. The rest of the states generally follow California's policies.

Candles were specifically exempted from VOC regulations in a California regulatory advisor letter in 1996 discussing VOCs and fragrances in consumer products. There is an exemption for products that are comprised entirely of fragrance and non-VOC ingredients. The only volatile components of candles are in the fragrance. The wax and other components are considered non-volatile. Candles are specifically cited in this interpretation as meeting this exemption and therefore are not VOC regulated.

In addition, in 2019, the California Air Resources Board (CARB) proposed a VOC regulation and limit for candles. NCA representatives met with CARB staff to present arguments against setting a VOC standard for candles. NCA convinced CARB staff that a VOC limit for candles is neither practical or necessary. CARB withdrew the proposal and the policy that candles are not regulated is still in effect.

If additional information is needed on this topic, please contact NCA staff.