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**For Immediate Release**

**Frommelt Products Corporation Identifies Trend in Dock Seal Fire Hazard, Launches a Series of Safety Initiatives and Expands Availability of Exclusive Firefighter™ Technology**

**Milwaukee – February 18, 2003** – Due to steady growth in the number of customer-reported loading dock fires throughout the United States – and the need to raise awareness about the threat of fire at thousands of facilities today – Frommelt Products Corporation has launched a series of safety initiatives to address the newly discovered hazard. It has also expanded the availability of its exclusive Firefighter™ technology to a range of Frommelt dock seal products.

Since July 2001, Frommelt has documented more than 80 dock seal fire incidents at a wide array of U.S. industrial and commercial plants. The incidents stem from a fire hazard involving dock seals and semi-trailer marker lights. The company found that fires occur when hot-running semi-trailer lights are compressed against any make or model of compression-style foam dock seals, often creating a serious safety threat that can result in extensive damage to buildings, trailers, and trailer contents. A leading provider of loading dock seals and shelters, Frommelt also said the number of company-reported fires has grown steadily since 1998.

At the same time, Frommelt reports that the number of undocumented fires caused by this phenomenon is likely to be substantially higher than company-reported incidents. The company estimates there are over 200,000 dock positions in U.S. currently at risk for potential dock seal fires.

Based on its findings and the risks involved, Frommelt officials have initiated discussions with the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) regarding the need to explore the problem on a larger scale. The company has also taken steps to increase awareness of dock seal fires throughout the United States and the availability of the only solution on the market that addresses the hazard.

In addition to a nationwide media campaign, the company has increased efforts to manufacture, market and distribute Frommelt Firefighter™ heat-dissipating technology. It is the only *fire-resistant* solution available that can prevent ignition of seals that occurs when they come into contact with hot-burning semi-trailer marker lights required on all over the road trailers today. The company now offers:

- Free inspections of compression-style foam dock seals to detect signs of trailer marker light damage;
- an Insulator™ Dock Sealing System (IDS) with the Firefighter™ head pad;
- Insulator dock seal side pads made with Firefighter technology; and
- Insulator head curtains made with Firefighter technology.

Frommelt Products Corporation President Paul Rowlett said an acute lack of awareness regarding the extent and severity of the problem dictated the need for action.

“We’ve identified a three-fold problem with U.S. dock fires,” said Rowlett. “First and foremost, research we’ve conducted has shown that it’s a bona fide problem with severe consequences. At the same time, we find that most facility decision-makers are totally unaware of the threat and don’t know how to identify the problem. What’s more, they also find it hard to believe it can happen to them. However, they’re typically awestruck when we show them undetected damage or burn marks on their own dock seals and explain how and why the problems occurs and what can happen if it’s left unchecked.”

Rowlett said Frommelt developed the first-of-its kind Firefighter technology to address the issue but added that an increase in the number of dock-seal fire related incidents drove the company to take additional steps.

“We’re getting calls virtually every day about docks seals with signs of trailer marker light damage that indicate a serious fire threat. In addition, the number of incidents we’ve tracked is up substantially from when we first learned of the problem,” Rowlett said. “As a result, we’ve extended our Firefighter technology to other Frommelt products and launched an internal and external campaign to bring attention to the hazard. As part of our commitment to safety, we’re also working to partner with a leading safety organization for a third-party investigation into the problem.”

According to Frommelt Engineering Manager Chuck Ashelin, years of detailed analyses and repeated tests show that the fire hazard stems from a number of factors, which include a federal motor vehicle safety standard and semi tractors with larger and dual alternators – both of which combine to produce more and hotter marker lights.

Ashelin said trailer light regulations have been around for decades. However, he said strict enforcement of the regulation did not occur until new legislative action took place in 1999 – which is the same year that Frommelt officials suspected the emergence of a new, and serious nationwide fire hazard. In the lab, meanwhile, Frommelt tests show that marker lights, left energized against a typical compressed dock seal head pad, generate temperatures high enough to cause a major fire. When in contact with foam pads, heat from the lights can reach 900 degrees Fahrenheit – well above the ignition point for fire – in a little as 20 minutes.

Meanwhile, Ashelin said many facility decision-makers are confused about the difference between fire retardant and fire-resistance, resulting in a dangerously false sense of security.

“Typical dock seals may be sold with optional fire-retardant foam and/or fabric,” Ashelin said. “The misconception, however, is that the fire retardant materials mean the dock seal is fireproof.

Unfortunately, it's not. By definition, fire retardant means that the material must first catch on fire and then extinguish itself. Only fire-resistant measures can prevent a fire, which is why we developed the Firefighter technology. It's also a key message we're working to spread."

Among other things, Frommelt products with Firefighter technology feature a triple layer of heat dissipating and reflective foil. As such, the temperature that a marker light can generate is limited to less than 400 degrees Fahrenheit, virtually eliminating the danger it presents.

Rowlett encouraged facility decision-makers to carefully check their dock seals for signs of fire damage, and not mistake signs of early heat damage with ordinary wear and tear. If damage is found, he strongly urged companies to take immediate preventive measures to avoid the threat of even a single dock fire, which could claim lives and cause millions of dollars in losses. He added that a movement is underway among trailer manufacturers to address the problem through the use of LED lights. However, he said trailers with traditional marker lights will be on the road for years to come.

"This is a serious problem that will be around for a long time and will only grow as the existing population of foam dock seals ages and individual seals are exposed to additional contact with hot trailer marker lights," he said. "Knowing the overall commitment to safety that exists in today's marketplace, it's important that facility decision-makers are made aware of this risk, as well as the solution."

**Editor's note:**

The enclosed fact sheet contains details about:

- *The causes of dock head pad fires;*
- *Frommelt statistics regarding U.S. head pad fires;*
- *Details on Frommelt Firefighter technology; and*
- *U.S. fire statistics as reported in 2001 by the National Fire Protection Association.*