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PRESS RELEASE ♦ FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

OFFICE PRODUCTS STANDARDS ADDRESSED BY INDUSTRY GROUPS

Initial Meeting for the Office Products Industry Data Standards Taskforce

Alexandria, VA — January 18, 2006— The National Office Products Alliance (NOPA) and Office Products Wholesalers Association (OPWA) and other industry groups met in Chicago on January 10 to discuss voluntary industry standards. NOPA facilitated the historic meeting with the active participation of OPWA and its Standards Committee, which includes wholesalers, manufacturers, and industry purchasing associations.

“We believe it is our responsibility to assist the independent dealer by achieving improved efficiency in the marketplace,” said Joe Templet, Vice President of OPWA, and Senior Vice President of United Stationers Supply Company. “This objective can be attained by our two associations working together to develop meaningful standards that will benefit the channels within the industry.”

The NOPA/OPWA Office Products Industry Data Standards Taskforce was organized in late 2005 with an immediate goal of developing voluntary standards that can be used for the next round of catalog implementations by wholesalers, buying groups and independent dealers. This ambitious objective has a short time frame and is expected to be completed by the end of the first quarter of 2006. Included in this initial phase is harmonization of manufacturer prefixes, units of measure and SKU standardization.

“It is vitally important for the consumer or end user to be able to interact with the independent dealer and find the product he or she is looking for in a minimum amount of time,” said Dick Dodge, The Office City and past Chair of NOPA. “Frequently I have dealers tell me that they have lost business or are unable to attract new business due to search problems. While standardization may initially require a modest amount of work for a dealer, the benefits of a better search capability far outweigh the cost.”

Paul Gatens, OPWA's Standards Committee Chair and Director, E-Commerce for S.P. Richards explained, "In this first team meeting, we reached consensus on many manufacturer prefix and unit of measure standards and a maintenance process going forward. The team developed solid action plans to push the project quickly to completion. I came away very satisfied with the cooperative results of this first unprecedented meeting."

NOPA and OPWA will make special efforts to communicate developments of this new industry-wide standardization initiative to the entire office products industry. The Taskforce understands the need to educate and involve other people and companies, and plans to inform them through a series of announcements and press releases. There will also be educational opportunities at industry events.

Participants of the initial Taskforce meeting were: Dick Dodge, The Office City; Charlie Cleary and Grady Taylor, TriMega; Paul Gatens and Dee King, S.P. Richards; John Hauptstueck, is.group; Rosalie Killian and Vicky Seward, BIC Corporation; Dominic LaPorta and Dave Vesledahl, 3M; Carey Doyle, Action/EMCO; Ed Streeter, ACCO Brands; Tod Moore, Trade Service Corporation; Lori Stevens and Joe Templet, United Stationers Company; Chris Bates and Mark Duros, NOPA; Rick Bushnell, Quad II; and Cal Clemons, OPWA.

The Standards Taskforce plans additional meetings and conference calls to continue its work. For additional information about the OPWA Standards Program, please visit <http://www.insightu.org/opwa/>.

About NOPA

NOPA is the trade association for independent office products dealers and their trading partners, and provides its more than 1,100 dealer members with business solutions – dealer advocacy and promotion, strategic information and research, and access to answers – that strengthen the dealer position in the marketplace. The association founded and sponsors the Independent Dealer Advocacy Fund and the NOPA-OFDA Political Action Committee (NOPA-OFDA PAC) to help level the playing field for independent dealers. More information on NOPA is available on the Web at www.nopanet.org or by calling (800) 542-6672.

About OPWA

The Office Products Wholesalers Association is comprised of wholesalers and manufacturers whose mission is to affirm the concept of wholesale distribution in the office products industry. OPWA promotes the growth of the industry, fosters communication and observes fair practices and ethical conduct within the office products industry.

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