

# NatureWorks® PLA Polymer 3001D

## Injection Molding Process Guide

NatureWorks® PLA (polylactide) polymer 3001D, a NatureWorks® product, is designed for injection molding applications. It is designed for clear applications with heat deflection temperatures lower than 130°F (55°C). See Table 1 for properties.

### Applications

The varieties of products made with NatureWorks 3001D grow every day. Applications include cutlery, cups, plates and saucers, and outdoor novelties.

### Processing Information

3001D polymer injection molding applications can be processed on conventional injection molding equipment. The material is stable in the molten state, provided that the drying procedures are followed. Mold flow is highly dependent on melt temperature. It is recommended to balance screw speed, back pressure, and process temperature to control melt temperature. Injection speed should be medium to fast.

### Machine Configuration

PLA polymer 3001D will process on conventional injection molding machinery. A general purpose screw designed to minimize residence time and shear works well. Please refer to the PLA Injection Molding Guide for more information.

### Process Details

#### Startup and Shutdown

PLA polymer 3001D is not compatible with a wide variety of polyolefin resins, and special purging

Processing Temperature Profile		
Melt Temperature	390°F	200°C
Feed Throat	70°F	20°C
Feed Temperature (crystalline pellets)	330°F	165°C
Feed Temperature (amorphous pellets)	300°F	150°C
Compression Section	380°F	195°C
Metering Section	400°F	205°C
Nozzle	400°F	205°C
Mold	75°F	25°C
Screw Speed	100-175 rpm	
Back Pressure	50-100 psi	
Mold Shrinkage	.004 in/in. +/- .001	

Note: These are starting points and may need to be optimized.

Table 1 – Typical Material & Application Properties <sup>(1)</sup>

	PLA Resin (General Purpose)	ASTM Method
<b>Physical Properties</b>		
Specific Gravity	1.24	D792
Melt Index, g/10 min (190°C/2.16K)	10-30	D1238
Clarity	Transparent	
<b>Mechanical Properties</b>		
Tensile Yield Strength, psi (MPa)	7,000 (48)	D638
Tensile Elongation, %	2.5	D638
Notched Izod Impact, ft-lb/in (J/m)	0.3 (0.16)	D256
Flexural Strength (MPa)	12,000 (83)	D790
Flexural Modulus (MPa)	555,000 (3828)	D790

<sup>(1)</sup> Typical properties; not to be construed as specifications.

sequences should be followed:

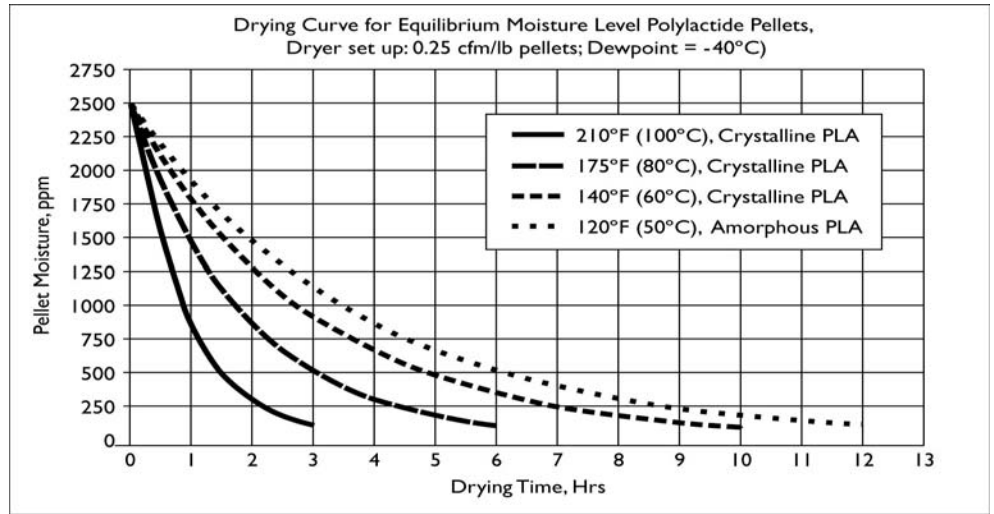
1. Clean extruder and bring temperatures to steady state with low-viscosity, general-purpose polystyrene or polypropylene.
2. Vacuum out hopper system to avoid contamination.
3. Introduce PLA polymer into the extruder at the operating conditions used in Step 1.
4. Once PLA polymer has purged, reduce barrel temperatures to desired set points.
5. At shutdown, purge machine with high-viscosity polystyrene or polypropylene.

# NatureWorks® PLA Polymer 3001D

## Drying

In-line drying is recommended for PLA resins. A moisture content of less than 0.025% (250 ppm) is recommended to prevent viscosity degradation. Polymer is supplied in foil-lined boxes or bags dried to <400 ppm. The resin should not be exposed to atmospheric conditions after drying. Keep the package sealed until ready to use and promptly dry and reseal any unused material. The drying curves for both amorphous and crystalline resins are shown to the right.

Note: Amorphous polymer must be dried below 120F (50C).



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### Safety and Handling Considerations

Material Safety Data (MSD) sheets for PLA polymers are available from NatureWorks LLC. MSD sheets are provided to help customers satisfy their own handling, safety, and disposal needs, and those that may be required by locally applicable health and safety regulations, such as OSHA (U.S.A.), MAK (Germany), or WHMIS (Canada). MSD sheets are updated regularly; therefore, please request and review the most current MSD sheets before handling or using any product.

The following comments apply only to PLA polymers; additives and processing aids used in fabrication and other materials used in finishing steps have their own safe-use profile and must be investigated separately.

### Hazards and Handling Precautions

PLA polymers have a very low degree of toxicity and, under normal conditions of use, should pose no unusual problems from incidental ingestion, or eye and skin contact. However, caution is advised when handling, storing, using, or disposing of these resins, and good housekeeping and controlling of dusts are necessary for safe handling of product. Workers should be protected from the possibility of contact with molten resin during fabrication. Handling and fabrication of resins can result in the generation of vapors and dusts that may cause irritation to eyes and the upper respiratory tract. In dusty atmospheres, use an approved dust respirator. Pellets or beads may present a slipping hazard. Good general ventilation of the polymer processing area is recommended. At temperatures exceeding the polymer melt temperature (typically 170°C), polymer can release fumes, which may contain fragments of the polymer,

creating a potential to irritate eyes and mucous membranes. Good general ventilation should be sufficient for most conditions. Local exhaust ventilation is recommended for melt operations. Use safety glasses if there is a potential for exposure to particles which could cause mechanical injury to the eye. If vapor exposure causes eye discomfort, use a full-face respirator. No other precautions other than clean, body-covering clothing should be needed for handling PLA polymers. Use gloves with insulation for thermal protection when exposure to the melt is localized.

### Combustibility

PLA polymers will burn. Clear to white smoke is produced when product burns. Toxic fumes are released under conditions of incomplete combustion. Do not permit dust to accumulate. Dust layers can be ignited by spontaneous combustion or other ignition sources. When suspended in air, dust can pose an explosion hazard. Firefighters should wear positive-pressure, self-contained breathing apparatuses and full protective equipment. Water or water fog is the preferred extinguishing medium. Foam, alcohol-resistant foam, carbon dioxide or dry chemicals may also be used. Soak thoroughly with water to cool and prevent re-ignition.

### Disposal

DO NOT DUMP INTO ANY SEWERS, ON THE GROUND, OR INTO ANY BODY OF WATER. For unused or uncontaminated material, the preferred options include recycling into the process or sending to an industrial composting facility, if available; otherwise, send to an incinerator or other thermal destruction device. For used or contaminated material, the disposal options remain the same, although additional evaluation is required. (For example, in the U.S.A., see 40 CFR, Part 261, "Identification and Listing of Hazardous Waste.") All disposal methods must be in compliance with Federal, State/Provincial, and local laws and regulations.

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### Environmental Concerns

Generally speaking, lost pellets are not a problem in the environment except under unusual circumstances when they enter the marine environment. They are benign in terms of their physical environmental impact, but if ingested by waterfowl or aquatic life, they may

mechanically cause adverse effects. Spills should be minimized, and they should be cleaned up when they happen. Plastics should not be discarded into the ocean or any other body of water.

### Product Stewardship

NatureWorks LLC has a fundamental duty to all those that make and use our products, and for the environment in which we live. This duty is the basis for our Product Stewardship philosophy, by which we assess the health and environmental information on our products and their intended use, then take appropriate steps to protect the environment and the health of our employees and the public.

### Customer Notice

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### NOTICE REGARDING PROHIBITED USE

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