

New Zealand Proposes Government Product Safety Policy Statement on Acceptable Limits of Formaldehyde in Clothing & Textiles

In order to provide a clear guidance to the manufacturers and importers as to the acceptable limits of formaldehyde in clothing and textiles without the need for legislation, the New Zealand Government has recently proposed a product safety policy statement, aiming to complement the Consumer Guarantees Act by setting out what is considered acceptable quality and fit for purpose. This also includes the meaning of products, being supplied, must be safe to use.



Voluntary compliance with the policy statement will be monitored by the Ministry of Consumer Affairs Measurement and Product Safety Service. Although the Ministry will not have power to take enforcement action under the Fair Trading Act if a breach of the guidance is identified, any evidence of failure to comply with the limits set out in the policy statement will support the need for mandatory regulation under section 29 of the Fair Trading Act 1986 or even a product recall or ban under sections 31 and 32 of the Act.

In recognition of other countries' requirements (**Table 2**), the policy statement has proposed the acceptable formaldehyde limits (**Table 1**) utilizing the internationally recognized test method of EN ISO 14184-1:1998 for determination of formaldehyde content.

Table 1 – New Zealand proposed Government Product Safety Policy Statement on Acceptable Limits for Formaldehyde in Clothing and Other Textiles

Product Category	Proposed Formaldehyde Limit	Rationale
Clothing for babies and infants under 2 years of age	No greater than 30 ppm (30mg/kg)	In recognition of the European Union advice, and the European and eco-label standard.
Clothing specifically designed and marketed as for people (both children and adults) with sensitive skin or to avoid any sensitive reaction with skin	No greater than 30 ppm (30mg/kg)	In recognition of the European Union advice, and the European and eco-label standard.
Clothing and textiles in direct contact with skin	No greater than 100 ppm (100 mg/kg), or no greater than 100 ppm (100 mg/kg) after wash if there is a label or instruction recommending to "wash before first use".	In recognition of the approach adopted by the Netherlands of allowing for items which meet safe limits after an initial wash.
Clothing and textiles not in direct contact with skin	No greater than 300 ppm (300 mg/kg)	In recognition of a number of other jurisdictions limits and the eco-label standard limit.

The proposed policy statement is still opened for public comments until 28 November, 2007.

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Table 2 – International Formaldehyde Limits in Clothing and Other Textiles

Country	Textiles for babies and infants	Textiles in direct skin contact	Textiles not in direct skin contact
<i>Austria</i>	<i>With 1500 ppm or above must be labeled.</i>	<i>With 1500 ppm or above must be labeled.</i>	<i>With 1500 ppm or above must be labeled.</i>
<i>China</i>	$\leq 20 \text{ ppm}^1$	$\leq 75 \text{ ppm}$	$\leq 300 \text{ ppm}$
<i>France</i>	20 ppm^2	200 ppm	400 ppm
<i>Finland</i>	$\leq 30 \text{ ppm}^1$	$\leq 100 \text{ ppm}$	$\leq 300 \text{ ppm}$
<i>Norway</i>	30 ppm^1	100 ppm	300 ppm
<i>Germany</i>	<i>With 1500 ppm or above must bear the label "Contains formaldehyde - Washing this garment is recommended prior to first time use in order to avoid irritation of the skin."</i>	<i>With 1500 ppm or above must bear the label "Contains formaldehyde - Washing this garment is recommended prior to first time use in order to avoid irritation of the skin."</i>	---
<i>Japan</i>	<i>Not detectable (20 ppm)¹</i>	75 ppm	---
<i>Netherlands</i>	<i>More than 120 ppm must bear the label "Wash before first use", and the product must not contain more than 120 ppm after wash.</i>	<i>More than 120 ppm must bear the label "Wash before first use", and the product must not contain more than 120 ppm after wash.</i>	---

¹ Textiles for babies under 2 years.

² Textiles for babies under 3 years.

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