

AFIRM Mission

AFIRM is the Apparel and Footwear International RSL Management (AFIRM) Working Group, established in 2004. AFIRM's mission is "to reduce the use and impact of harmful substances in the apparel and footwear supply chain." AFIRM's purpose is to provide a forum to advance the global management of restricted substances in apparel and footwear, communicate information about chemical management to the supply chain, discuss concerns, and exchange ideas for improving chemical management.

AFIRM Vision

AFIRM continues to be a recognized global center of excellence, providing resources to enable continuous advancement of chemical management best practices. We do this based on transparency, science, and collaboration with relevant industries and experts to build safer and more sustainable chemistry within the apparel and footwear supply chains. It is understood that in adopting this vision, AFIRM's mission, objectives, and projects will continue to be product-focused or RSL-related.

Policy Statement and Uses of This Chemistry Toolkit

Apparel and Footwear International RSL Management (AFIRM) Working Group has developed this Chemistry Toolkit as part of its mission "to reduce the use and impact of harmful substances in the apparel and footwear supply chain."

This Chemistry Toolkit provides an overview of basic information on how to begin to implement an RSL program, which is a highly customized process that depends on many factors, including the products being produced and where they are sold.

Many brands also have implementation guidelines, and suppliers must follow those guidelines, where available. The reader should not rely on this document to address specific questions that apply to a particular set of facts: All questions should be directed to the specific brand company whose products are at issue.

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For more information about AFIRM, visit www.afirm-group.com.

1. Introduction

In response to feedback from the global supply chain, Apparel and Footwear International RSL Management Working Group (AFIRM Group) has updated this Chemistry Toolkit as part of our ongoing mission “to reduce the use and impact of harmful substances in the apparel and footwear supply chain.”

Definition of “Restricted Substances”

Restricted substances are chemicals and other substances the use and/or presence of which has been banned or otherwise restricted by a brand.

Typically, a restricted substance must be absent from a finished product or present below maximum allowable levels.

Restricted substances may be restricted across many industries, across one industry, or in certain products or inputs.

Please see Appendix J for a glossary of other relevant terms.

Why Substances Are Restricted

Substances are restricted for many reasons. Some substances are restricted due to concern for the environment, while others are restricted due to health and safety concerns for workers or consumers. Some are restricted by legislation.

Substances are restricted in different ways. As noted above, some substances are banned from use during the manufacturing process or banned from finished products entirely. Other substances might be banned if they are present above certain concentration limits or if they leach a certain amount from a finished product under predefined conditions.

In each case, a substance restriction is usually accompanied by a test method that brands and suppliers can use to verify if a chemical is present and, if so, to ensure the chemical is below the restricted level.

This Chemistry Toolkit focuses on the needs of brands, suppliers, and upstream vendors—including raw material and chemical suppliers, mills, dye houses, trim and packaging suppliers, screen-printers, factories, and other business entities involved in the manufacture of apparel and footwear finished goods.

Notable additions to this update of the Toolkit include an extensive Chemical Guidance Document (Appendix H) and RSL Corrective Action Examples (Appendix D). Both references provide specific technical information to help eliminate or reduce restricted substances in finished goods to meet brand requirements for restricted substances.

While this Toolkit is primarily focused on eliminating restricted substances from finished products, extensive information about chemical discharge into wastewater, air emissions, and solid waste is available in Appendix G.

AFIRM Welcomes Your Feedback to Inform Future Toolkit Updates

The AFIRM training committee made a concerted effort to update this 2018 Chemistry Toolkit. Our aim is to make it as reader-friendly and useful as possible for brands beginning their journeys toward chemical compliance as well as for suppliers educating themselves on these topics. Reach out to us with suggestions for topics to include in future updates as well as feedback regarding content you found unnecessary.

Your comments will help us improve the Toolkit to meet your needs! Contact: nsponsler@phylmar.com