5. RSL Testing

Many brands have specific RSL testing requirements. If your customer does not have testing requirements, AFIRM recommends that all suppliers develop a testing program of their own. Appendix B represents a brand testing program, which is from the brand's point of view and may be helpful in understanding testing issues. If your customer does not have testing requirements, suppliers are encouraged to trust, but verify, that vendors are RSL-compliant through a testing program.

Brand-approved Laboratories

Typically, brands have their own lists of approved laboratories, and test samples must be sent only to laboratories approved by the brand.

Criteria for Selecting a Laboratory

If your customer does not have a list of approved laboratories, here are some considerations to keep in mind when choosing a laboratory for your own testing.

- Does the lab hold certifications or accreditations? From whom? (Accreditation is required by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act, enacted 14 August 2008.)

- Does the lab follow good laboratory practices (GLPs) or ISO 17025 guidelines?

- Does the lab have a quality policy statement or other document stating general quality procedures?

- What was the date and result of a recent external audit? Is a report available?

- Does the lab belong to a private quality assurance organization?

- Does the lab regularly participate in any round-robin or blind sample testing?

- Is the lab open to a site visit or audit?

- Are in-house protocols documented in manuals? Are they available to customers?

- Has the lab ever been denied or lost certification?

- Is a list of key scientists, including their degrees, certifications, etc. available?

- Is a list of major on-site analytical equipment available?

- Is a list of reference methods the lab routinely performs available?

- Is a list of sample handling and preparation capabilities available?

- Approximately how many analyses does the lab conduct per month or year?

- What percentage of the lab's analyses are subcontracted to a third party?

- In what languages are reports available?

- Are data processed by hand or computer?

- Does the lab have an automated laboratory information management system (LIMS)?