

## Leather goods

In the guide

The legislation

Azo dyes, chromium VI and dimethyl fumarate

Azo dyes in products

Chromium VI in products

Dimethyl fumarate in products

Second-hand leather goods

Manufacturers and importers

What should I do to make sure I comply?

Penalties

Key legislation

**Note:** although the United Kingdom has left the European Union, certain EU laws (known as 'retained' laws) will still apply until such time as they are replaced by new UK legislation; this means that you will still see references to EU legislation in our guidance.

### This guidance is for England, Scotland and Wales

Any consumer product made of leather - for example, clothing, shoes, bags, belts, furniture, soft furnishings, and even equine equipment, such as saddles and bridles - is subject to controls on the chemicals that may be present as a result of the tanning process. Chemicals such as azo dyes, chromium VI and dimethyl fumarate (DMF) have previously been found to be present in leather goods and are now restricted under regulations due to the health hazards they pose to consumers.

If you are not the manufacturer or importer, you should check with your supplier that the products comply with the Regulations. This could involve asking to see test certificates, or auditing your suppliers if you are a large retailer. If you are a manufacturer or importer, you would normally be expected to have tested your products to ensure that they comply.

### The legislation

Regulation (EC) No 1907/2006 *concerning the Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation, and Restriction of Chemicals (REACH)* regulates the use of azo dyes, chromium VI and dimethyl fumarate (DMF).

Anyone who supplies consumer leather products intended to come into direct and prolonged contact with the skin, and that may contain any of these chemicals, will be affected by the Regulation. Examples are as follows:

- clothing

- hats
- footwear
- gloves
- wristwatch straps
- handbags
- purses
- toys containing leather
- furniture
- soft furnishings
- equine equipment, such as saddles and bridles

## **Azo dyes, chromium VI and dimethyl fumarate**

Azo dyes are organic compounds. Azo dyes are used to treat textiles, leather articles and some foods. Some - such as dinitroaniline orange, ortho nitroaniline orange, or pigment orange 1, 2, and 5 - are mutagenic and carcinogenic. Azo dyes derived from benzidine are carcinogens.

Tanning is the process of making raw hides or skins into leather. The majority of leathers used in furniture, gloves and footwear are tanned using chromium salts. Contact with the skin can cause burns and contact-dermatitis allergic reactions, which appear as reddening of the skin, itching and rashes.

Chromium VI is a skin sensitiser; future reactions can be caused when only a very small amount is in contact with the skin. There are also dangers from ingestion. This is a particularly important hazard to assess for young children's toys or clothing where there is a risk of mouthing. Studies have shown the ingestion of chromium VI may affect the liver, kidneys and the immune system.

DMF is used as a biocide in leather products, such as furniture or shoes, to prevent growths of mould during storage or transport in a humid climate. DMF has been found to be an allergic sensitiser at very low concentrations, producing an eczema reaction that is difficult to treat. Concentrations as low as 1ppm may produce allergic reactions.

## **Azo dyes in products**

Azo dyes, which may release one or more listed aromatic amines above 30 mg/kg (0.003% by weight), must not be used in articles that may come into direct and prolonged contact with the human skin or oral cavity - for example:

- clothing
- hats
- footwear
- gloves
- wristwatch straps
- handbags
- purses / wallets (including those worn around the neck)
- briefcases
- purses
- leather toys and toys that include leather garments

Leather articles must not be placed on the market unless they conform to these requirements.

## Chromium VI in products

Leather articles or articles containing leather parts coming into contact with the skin must not be placed on the market where they contain chromium VI in concentrations equal to or greater than 3 mg/kg (0.0003% by weight) of the total dry weight of the leather.

## Dimethyl fumarate in products

Leather products containing the biocide DMF in concentrations greater than 0.1 mg/kg must not be placed on the market.

## Second-hand leather goods

For products sold second-hand, the General Product Safety Regulations 2005 (GPSR) apply. These require goods supplied to be safe so the restrictions will still apply.

## Manufacturers and importers

You are classed as a 'producer' if you are one of the following:

- the manufacturer of a product established in a Member State of the European Union (EU)
- any other person presenting themselves as the manufacturer by affixing to the product their name, trademark or other distinctive mark
- the importer of a product from outside of the EU

## What should I do to make sure I comply?

If you are come under the definition of a producer, you would normally be expected to have tested your products to ensure that they comply. It is recommended that a reputable test house should carry out any testing, such as one accredited by the United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS).

If you are not a producer, you should check with your supplier that the products comply with the Regulations. This could involve asking to see test certificates, or auditing your suppliers if you are a large retailer. How much you need to do depends on a number of circumstances - for example, the size of your business - but doing nothing will not be sufficient.

## Penalties

Failure to comply with trading standards law can lead to enforcement action and to sanctions, which may include a fine and/or imprisonment. For more information please see 'Trading standards: powers, enforcement & penalties'.

## Key legislation

General Product Safety Regulations 2005

Regulation (EC) No 1907/2006 *concerning the Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation, and Restriction of Chemicals (REACH)*

## REACH Enforcement Regulations 2008

Last reviewed / updated: July 2020

### In this update

Definition of producer added

### Please note

This information is intended for guidance; only the courts can give an authoritative interpretation of the law.

The guide's 'Key legislation' links may only show the original version of the legislation, although some amending legislation is linked to separately where it is directly related to the content of a guide. Information on amendments to legislation can be found on each link's 'More Resources' tab.

© 2021 Chartered Trading Standards Institute

**Source URL:** <https://www.businesscompanion.info/en/quick-guides/product-safety/leather-goods>