

LEATHER STANDARD by OEKO-TEX® test criteria: New regulations in 2018

Zurich (mh) At the start of the year, the OEKO-TEX® Association as usual updated the applicable test criteria and limit values for product certification in accordance with LEATHER STANDARD by OEKO-TEX®. The following new regulations come into effect on 01 April 2018 for all certifications, following a three-month transition period:

- At the parameter “Other chemical residues”, more substances are now recorded for all product classes, referring here to:

Bisphenol A Limit value for all product classes: 0.1 %

Aniline Limit value for all product classes: 100 mg/kg

Bisphenol A is included in the ECHA-SVHC candidate list (substances of very high concern) and can be used in softener chemicals, for example. The aromatic amine aniline is classified in MAK group III category 4 by the DFG Senate Commission for testing of hazardous working materials. Aniline is signalized, amongst others, with “Suspected of causing cancer” (H351) and “Suspected of causing genetic defects” (H341) by the European Chemical Agency ECHA.

If one (or more) of these substances is found as chemical residue to exceed the respective limit values during sample testing, then the sample cannot be certified.

- The following substance groups are recorded additionally in the parameter “Surfactant, wetting agent residues”: Heptylphenol, branched and linear, and pentyphenol, branched and linear. The total limit values for alkylphenols and alkylphenol ethoxylates remain unchanged.

Heptylphenol, branched and linear, and 4-tert.-pentyphenol (p-1,1-[dimethylpropyl]phenol) are classified as “substances of very high concern” in the ECHA candidate list.

- The limit value for the group of short-chain chlorinated paraffins, which are also included on the ECHA-SVHC candidate list, is lowered to 100 mg/kg for all product classes.
- Regarding the use of process preservative agents, which are necessary variously in the leather production process, special regulations for ortho-phenylphenol (OPP) und 4-chloro-3-methylphenol (CMC) have been determined. For more details on this, refer to the LEATHER STANDARD by OEKO-TEX® document.
- For better comparison with RSL lists from NGOs, retail chains, etc., the requirements of various colourants are now shown directly in mg/kg in the tables of Appendix 4. In comparison to version 2017 of the LEATHER STANDARD by OEKO-TEX®, this does not constitute a change concerning the requirements themselves, but should solely contribute to easier understanding.
- Five further dyes in particular are explicitly cited under the section “Dyestuffs and pigments classified as carcinogenic” in Appendix 5. Here this refers to solvent yellow 1, solvent yellow 3, direct brown 95, direct blue 15 and acid red 114. The use of these dyes has already been banned for years. The test is carried out indirectly during testing for azo colorants. The explicit mention of these dyes now enables customers to make easier comparison with RSL lists from NGOs and retail chains, etc.
- Finally, the substances quinoline and phenol are to be found at the parameter “Other chemical residues” with the requirement “under observation”. This means that quinoline and phenol randomly are now also tested for during OEKO-TEX® testing and the result is passed on to the applicant for information purposes. Quinoline and phenol, however, currently do not have a limit value. Quinoline is or can be used for the production of colorants and some other chemical auxiliaries. Quinoline is classified as a CMR substance (carcinogenic, mutagenic or toxic to reproduction substance) by ECHA and is discussed in ECHA work groups under the theme “CMR substances in textiles”. Phenol can be absorbed through the skin. It is classified as poisonous, corrosive and health hazardous and is suspected to cause genetic defects. The OEKO-TEX® Association progresses proactively here and with the new concept “under observation” collects important information as a first step regarding the actual relevance of quinoline and phenol in leather materials.

- Last but not least: If a certificate as per the LEATHER STANDARD by OEKO-TEX® is desired for skins or furs, they are subject to special regulations: Only skins and furs that are included on an accepted OEKO-TEX® list can be certified. Further details can be found in the standard document of LEATHER STANDARD by OEKO-TEX®.

Through many of these new requirements, the OEKO-TEX® Association strongly supports not only the “Zero Discharge of Hazardous Chemicals (ZDHC)” initiative but also the “Detox Campaign”. In this way, OEKO-TEX® is able to strengthen awareness concerning responsible handling of potentially hazardous substances in leather products throughout the leather manufacturing chain and to play a pioneering role in contributing to effective consumer protection.

For more information on the new OEKO-TEX® test criteria, please contact the OEKO-TEX® Secretariat (info@oeko-tex.com) or your responsible OEKO-TEX® Institute (www.oeko-tex.com/institutes).