

Customer Information

STeP by OEKO-TEX® – New Criteria 2016

Beginning 1 February 2016, new criteria will be in place for the certification of environmentally friendly and socially responsible production facilities in accordance with STeP by OEKO-TEX®. A list of the most important amendments is given below:

- The list of harmful substances for textile production (“Manufacturing Restricted Substances List”, MRSL) included in the STeP standard has complied with the requirements of the ZDHC initiative (“Zero Discharge of Hazardous Chemicals”) since the version published as of November 2015. Production facilities that have been certified in accordance with STeP since this change currently meet the ZDHC specifications regarding the use of specific process chemicals to be removed from textile production by 2020. Companies already certified in accordance with STeP will comply with the MRSL criteria of the ZDHC following their next audit.

The changes resulting from the new regulations for the OEKO-TEX® Standard 100 published in January 2016 were also included in the current STeP MRSL.

- In the “Environmental Performance” module, the previous requirements of the STeP standard have been expanded to include an additional point on handling sludge from waste water treatment. According to the new regulation, STeP certified companies must store sludge in a secure place so that ground contamination at the company premises is excluded - particularly if the sludge contains heavy metals from dyeing processes. Although sludge is used as a fertiliser in many regions of the world, OEKO-TEX® recommends that water treatment residues of this type are always disposed of professionally by specialist companies in accordance with environmental protection regulations. However if sludge is still used for agricultural purposes, the new limit values for harmful substances defined in appendix G8 must be complied with unless national statutory standards have stricter requirements for sludge. In addition, STeP requires that companies have the sludge used for agricultural purposes tested at least once a year by an independent institution to ensure compliance with STeP limit values and / or statutory standards and that the companies strive for continual improvement.
- In the new STeP standard, the “Social Responsibility” module contains minor amendments to further improve employee working conditions. Companies are explicitly encouraged to invest in local projects. In addition, they must meet all statutory standards relating to suitable maternity protection. If there are no statutory regulations, the companies are encouraged to define their own company guidelines to ensure

paid maternity leave in the context of ILO Core Labour Standard 183. In the future, companies with the STeP certificate must provide accident insurance or use another method to ensure that employees receive compensation in the case of industrial accidents and injuries. In addition to basic equal treatment of employees, the STeP standard now also explicitly requires that companies pay equal wages, regardless of gender, age, race or other personal characteristics. STeP also requires that companies introduce a long-term wage monitoring system which should help to ensure that the income of the employees continues to improve on the basis of balanced wage negotiations.

- The overview of third-party certifications accepted by OEKO-TEX®, which is included in appendix C of the STeP standard, was expanded to include an additional category for ethical standards. In this, the Responsible Down Standard (RDS) has now been explicitly listed as a reference tool which STeP certified companies can use to provide evidence of the responsible procurement of feathers and down in the manufacture of their products.
- To make STeP certification accessible to the widest possible range of production facilities in the textile chain (from suppliers to accessories), the standard has been expanded in such a way that, with immediate effect, manufacturers of foams and mattresses can also have their production conditions certified in accordance with STeP.
- The exclusion criteria for certification defined in appendix M of the STeP standard have also been expanded. For example, with immediate effect, production facilities must provide a map of the production premises showing all areas in which chemicals are delivered, stored and/or used. In addition, certified companies must now have their emergency equipment tested at least once a year: previously it was every two years. If a production company uses substances listed in the STeP MRSL, neither the employees nor the environment must come into contact with them unless exposure to this substance is described clearly and documented or approved by a responsible authority.
- In appendix G of the STeP standard, new additional limit values relating to the output of carbon monoxide (G3), sulphur dioxide (G5) and nitrogen oxide (G6) have been defined for waste air emissions from gas turbine power plants.
- The requirements of the STeP standard to prevent accidental events with consequences for the environment have been expanded so that, for successful certification in the future, production facilities must also provide evidence of the secure transport of chemicals as well as appropriate training of their

employees.

- To ensure the seamless compliance of STeP criteria within the contractually agreed unannounced audit in the future, STeP certified companies must provide a document, signed by the company's senior management team, which enables the OEKO-TEX® auditors to access the certified production facilities at any time. The document must be signed by a maximum of six senior corporate managers. At the same time, the company must ensure that at least one of the listed persons is available at the company at all times to accompany the auditor when carrying out the audit.

More detailed information on the updated requirements for the STeP by OEKO-TEX® standard is available from the OEKO-TEX® Secretariat (info@oeko-tex.com) or from the OEKO-TEX® member institutes (www.oeko-tex.com/institutes).



Beginning 1 February 2016, production facilities in the textile chain must comply with new requirements for certification in accordance with STeP by OEKO-TEX®. Before the certificate is issued, the companies must complete an extensive online assessment and successful audit of the production facilities by an OEKO-TEX® member institute.