

Loom bands and loom band charms – children’s safety is paramount

Brussels 25 August 2014: ECPI is committed to the safety and sustainability of plasticisers and would like to provide factual information relating to plasticisers including phthalates. Recently, stories covering the results of tests done on 16 packets of imported loom bands and loom band charms carried out by the [Birmingham Assay Office](#) (BMA) in the UK have been published in the media. The analyses showed that the loom band charms contained phthalate levels higher than that which is allowed by EU regulation. ECPIs understanding is that the loom bands themselves are not made with flexible PVC (made with plasticisers), but rather the charms which can be attached to the loom bands which can be made of flexible PVC (made with plasticisers).

Firstly, children’s safety is paramount and any products which are not conforming with legislative requirements should be removed from the market by the relevant authorities in order to ensure consumer safety. Secondly, it should though be noted that most of these news stories, including the announcement posted by the BMA, have incorrectly labelled phthalates as carcinogenic substances. This is simply not correct as, extensive research has shown, that phthalates are not carcinogenic for humans. Certain phthalates are however classified as reproductive agents and are subject to stringent regulation under REACH and other EU legislation. It should also be noted that plasticisers including phthalates bind tightly within the plastic material and do not readily migrate. In addition plasticisers including phthalates are not readily absorbed via the skin and saliva as has been stated in the media. Even if placed in the mouth, it requires prolonged chewing for the plasticisers to be released. Such loom band charms should definitely not be placed in the mouth since they represent a potential choking hazard for children.

In public and media debates, scientific rigour and factual accuracy is essential to avoid making unjustified, generic claims when referring to the effects of any substance, and in order to ensure consumer safety is based on factual information.

In some of the press articles, phthalates are also linked to endocrine disruption issues. However, phthalates are a large and diverse group of substances used in a wide variety of applications and with very distinct properties and requirements in terms of regulation, classification and labelling.

Although the BMA announcement does not specify what phthalates were found on its tests, it is important to emphasise that high molecular weight phthalates, representing almost 85% of phthalates used in Europe, are not endocrine disruptors, nor do they show toxicity to reproduction.

Loom band charms produced in accordance to EU legislation should not present any risk to children’s health. However, in this case, the non-conforming loom band charms analysed in the UK were imported from outside of the European Union and as such the distribution of non-compliant articles is an issue of enforcement. Custom offices and RAPEX should be made aware of the results of the tests to control existing and future imports accordingly.

Over the last 20 years European Plasticiser manufacturers have made major strides in the development of alternatives to the classified phthalates, including non-classified high molecular weight phthalates, cyclohexanoates, terephthalates and citrates.

About EPCI: *The European Council for Plasticisers and Intermediates is a Brussels-based trade association representing the common interests of European manufacturers of plasticisers, alcohols and acids. Member companies are BASF, Deza, Evonik, ExxonMobil, Grupa Azoty and Perstorp. ECPI is a sector group of Cefic, the European Chemical Industry Council, which represents the interests of the European chemical industry.*

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