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The Australian Ecolabel Program

Australian Voluntary Environmental Labelling Standard

Nappy and Nappy Wipe Products



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Use Of This Standard

This voluntary environmental labelling standard may be used by competent environmental assessors to establish product compliance to the Australian Ecolabel Program. Products that are certified with the mark of conformity, the "Environmental Choice Label" have been independently tested and demonstrate compliance to the environmental and social performance criteria detailed in this standard. The overall goal of environmental labels and declarations is, through communication of verifiable and accurate information, that is not misleading, on environmental aspects of products and services, to encourage the demand for and supply of those products and services that cause less stress on the environment, thereby stimulating the potential for market-driven continuous environmental improvement.

This standard identifies environmental, quality, regulatory and social performance criteria that products sold on the Australian market can meet in order to be considered as best "environment practice". Products that have been certified as complying to this standard may gain greater market recognition and a marketing advantage in government and business procurement programs and broad consumer environmental preference.

This standard can be used by Australian producers to guide their design for environment programs by using the environmental criteria as key performance benchmarks that reduce the environmental loads of their product. The standard is necessarily restricted in its identification of environmental loads from the product life cycle. Producers should consider other environmental improvement along the product cycle not included in this standard for their design for environment programs and aim for even higher levels of environmental performance where technically possible.

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CONTENTS

Abstract:	4
Current Status:	4
Date Published:	4
No of Pages:	4
Definitions:	4
1.0 Introduction To The Environmental Loads Of Nappy and Nappy Wipe Products	4
2.0 Product Category Scope of Standard	5
3.0 Environmental Performance Criteria	5
4.0 Compliance Testing	7

Voluntary Environmental Labelling Standard

Nappy and Nappy Wipe Products

Abstract

This Standard specifies environmental performance requirements of a broad range of sanitary products for the Australian Ecolabel Program. The program generally complies to ISO 14024: "Environmental labels and declarations - Guiding principles" which requires environmental labelling specifications to include criteria that are objective, reasonable and verifiable.

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Definitions:

"Chemical Oxygen Demand" (COD) means the mass concentration of oxygen equivalent to the amount of dichromate consumed by dissolved and suspended matter when a water sample is treated with that oxidant under defined conditions.

"Label" means the Environmental Choice Australia Label.

Indigenous Forests: Include all naturally occurring forests whether intact, degraded, scrub or rehabilitated lands other than those specifically planted with indigenous tree species, or enriched with indigenous or exotic tree species, primary for production purposes. Plantation forests whether in exotic or endemic species are accepted as being non-indigenous forests.

"Recycled Content" means material derived from waste generated by production or consumption activities that are not related to the process that manufactures the product. Recycled material must be sourced from post-consumer sources or industrial sources not related to the manufacturer of the product.

Post-Consumer: Material generated by households, or by commercial, industrial and institutional facilities in their role as end-users of the product, which can no longer be used for its intended purpose. This includes returns of material from the distribution chain.

Pre-Consumer: Material diverted from the waste stream during a manufacturing process. Excluded is re-utilisation of materials such as rework, regrind or scrap generated in a process and capable of being reclaimed within the same process that generated it.

"Sulphur" (S) means gaseous emissions of sulphur to the atmosphere, such as sulphur dioxide and reduced sulphur compounds.

1.0 Introduction To The Environmental Load Of Nappy Products

This Standard is a voluntary environmental labelling standard which specifies requirements for Nappy and Nappy Wipe products in a range of product sectors.

The main environmental impact of Nappy products derives from the production of the raw materials used in the products. These raw materials are paper pulp (fluff), cotton and various plastic parts. Colourants and perfumes may also be used in nappies to enhance the “feel good” attribute of the product. Because these products are disposable and widely used their use gives rise to significant quantities of waste. Sanitary products make up approximately 2% of total household waste (NSW EPA State of Environment Report 1997). There are also differences between the ways in which these wastes are treated within Australia with the recent introduction of recycling technology that can effectively recycled raw materials from this waste stream.

This standard stipulates minimum environmental performance requirements for pulp related to fibre source, emissions to water and air, energy consumption, the use of wood from sustainable forestry and the chemicals used in production.

The requirements as to cotton are that it must be cultivated organically in accordance with an internationally acknowledged standard or cultivated without the use of pesticides. Requirements as to plastic content have been imposed from a resource perspective and against the background of the way in which waste is processed. With a view to promoting the development of plastics that contain renewable materials, the requirement has been imposed that 5 w/w percentage of the plastic must be produced from renewable materials within the Australian waste management context.

2.0 Product Category Scope

This standard is applicable to all categories of Nappy and Nappy Wipe products including:

- 2.1 Disposable Children's Nappies
- 2.2 Incontinence care products (liners, contoured Nappies and Nappies with tape strips)
- 2.3 Sanitary towels (towels and panty liners)

3.0 Environmental Performance Criteria

3.1 Fitness for Purpose

Certified products should be good performers in their intended application. It is implied that certain standards of product performance are implicit in the label. Certified product must ensure that the product is fit for its intended purpose and where relevant:

- 3.1.1 The product meets the performance requirements of the relevant Australian Standard for its intended application; or
 - 3.1.2 The product meets any other internationally accepted standard if it is to be exported; or
 - 3.1.3 By means of laboratory tests or panel tests the manufacturer must document that the performance of the products is as good as equivalent products on the market (e.g. absorption capacity and wetback).
-

3.2 Packaging

Plastic packaging must be labelled in accordance with ISO 11469:2000 identifying the type of plastics packaging used. The plastic packaging must not be impregnated, labelled, coated or otherwise treated in a manner which would prevent post consumer recycling.

3.3 Material Content

3.3.1 Pulp and Viscose (regenerated cellulose)

- 3.3.1.1 The requirements apply to the individual pulp used in the production of the sanitary products. The pulp must fulfil the requirement as stated in the criteria document "Standard for Sanitary Paper".
- 3.3.1.2 COD discharges from cellulose pulp and fibre production must not exceed a total of 80 kg per tonne of regenerated cellulose. Chemical oxygen demand may also be stated as the equivalent quantity of TOC.
- 3.3.1.3 Chlorine gas (Cl₂) must not be used in the production of bleached cellulose pulp or fibre.
- 3.3.1.4 Optical brighteners must not be present in the paper pulps used in the product or in any part of the paper raw materials used in the product.
- 3.3.1.5 Discharges of zinc must not exceed 0.5 kg zinc per tonne of regenerated cellulose.
- 3.3.1.6 Emissions of sulphur from the production of dissolving pulp and fibre must not exceed 20 kg S/per tonne of viscose.

3.3.2 Plastics

3.3.2.1 The emissions of NO_x and SO₂ from the production of (monomerisation, polymerisation and granulation) of plastic (PE/PP) must not exceed the levels stated in table 1.

Substance	Maximum discharge
SO ₂ 11	[kg SO ₂ per tonne]
NO _x 12	[kg NO _x per tonne]

Table 1: maximum emissions levels from the production of plastic. (Not included emissions from the production of energy from an external source).

3.3.2.2 The polyester fibres produced by fibre extrusion must be produced without the use of organic solvents.

3.3.2.3 Nappy and Nappy Wipe products and their packaging must not contain chlorine-based plastics or phthalates.

3.3.3 Super absorbents (SAP)

Content of SAP in Nappy products may not exceed 400 ppm residual monomers and 5% w/w water soluble extracts.

3.3.4 Cotton

Raw cotton fibres must be cultivated organically or without the use of pesticides. Chlorine gas (Cl₂) must not be used in the bleaching of the cotton.

3.3.5 Other materials

Organic solvents must not be used if silicon is applied during production of backing paper. Adhesives must not contain phthalates.

3.4 Constituent Substances

3.4.1 Perfumes and lotions/moisturising creams must not be present in the product.

3.4.2 Deodorising substances are permitted only in incontinence care products.

3.4.3 The pigment in pigment inks must not be based on heavy metals.

3.4.4. Chemicals classified as harmful, irritant, allergenic, sensitising, carcinogenic, mutagenic, teratogenic, carcinogenic, teratogenic or environmentally harmful must not be used as raw materials in the end production of nappy and nappy wipe products.

3.5 Compliance to Environmental Regulations

The applicant is required to comply with relevant environmental legislation and government orders at the Local, State and Commonwealth level, if these have been issued. An applicants compliance with this criteria may be established by undertaking a series of random checks and gathering samples of applicant operational procedures and documents by approved assessors as evidence to support compliance during the verification and /or a statement of self declaration by an executive officer of the applicant organisation. Where an applicant is from an overseas jurisdiction, that jurisdictions environmental regulations apply.

3.6 Compliance to Labour, Anti-Discrimination and Safety Regulations

An applicant shall demonstrate that all employees are covered by a Federal or State award or a certified industrial agreement or a registered workplace agreement as determined by the Industrial Relations Commission, the Employment Advocate or a State or Territory Workplace Relations Agency.

An applicant shall demonstrate general compliance to the terms of State or Territory Legislation concerning Occupational, Health and Safety and/or the *Commonwealth Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988* where applicable. Where the applicant is subject to a breach order by a government agency or a guilty verdict by an Australian Court within the last 24 months on the basis of a breach of State, Territory or Commonwealth Occupational, Health and Safety Legislation there must be evidence of corrective action.

The applicant shall demonstrate general compliance to the requirements of the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975*, *Sex Discrimination Act 1984*, *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*, *Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Act 1999* and complementary State Legislation. Applicants cannot be in the list of 'named' or non-compliant employers under the *Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Act 1999*. Where the applicant is subject

to a breach order by a government agency or a guilty verdict by an Australian Court in the last 24 months on the basis of a breach of these Acts there must be evidence of corrective action.

Where an applicant is from an overseas jurisdiction, the applicant shall demonstrate general compliance to that jurisdictions anti-discrimination, occupational health and safety and workers compensations regulations. Where the applicant is subject to a breach order by a government agency or a guilty verdict by a legal court in their respective country within the last 24 months on the basis of a the breach of anti-discrimination, occupational health and safety and workers compensations regulations there must be evidence of corrective action.

An applicants compliance with these criteria may be established by undertaking a series of random checks and gathering samples of applicant operational procedures and documents by approved assessors as evidence to support compliance during the verification and /or a statement of self declaration by an executive officer of the applicant organisation.

4.0 Compliance Testing

Conformance with this standard shall be demonstrated by undertaking an assessment to the above criteria by an approved assessor following the certification and verification procedures detailed in Good Environmental Choice Australia Ltd Documented Quality Management System which generally follows the environmental auditing requirements of ISO 14 011 and 14 012.

The Australian Ecolabel Program classifies approved assessors as:

1. Assessors registered by Good Environmental Choice Australia Ltd as environmental professionals that hold expertise relevant for an assessment and which have undertaken training in the procedures of the Australian Ecolabel Program, or
2. Environmental auditors accredited with RABQSA Int. ; or
3. Assessors registered with the Environmental Choice New Zealand Trust.

New testing shall be undertaken by a laboratory accredited by the National Association of Testing Authorities (NATA) or similar overseas accreditation to carry out the relevant tests and/or documentation detailing environmental performance against the key indicators for this standard. The tests results should be presented on NATA endorsed reports or from a laboratory acceptable to Good Environmental Choice Australia Ltd

Audit evidence should be of such a quality and quantity that competent environmental auditors working independently of each other will reach similar audit findings from evaluation of the same audit evidence against the same audit criteria

Suitable sources of information to establish compliance may be but are not limited to:

- 1) Technical specification of the product.
- 2) Obvious characteristics of the product from examination.
- 3) Scientific and test results and reports.
- 4) Environmental management system and audit reports and results.
- 5) Life cycle assessment of each stage of the product life cycle via a physical audit and examination.
- 6) Life cycle assessment via scientific testing.
- 7) A statement of confirmation by an executive officer.
- 8) An assessment of company or government records.
- 9) Other material that can be considered objective evidence.

If testing results or environmental auditing results are not available, and/or there is not sufficient data to establish full compliance to the criteria required by this standard then certification cannot be awarded.
