

What is DMF?

Dimethyl Fumarate

Dimethyl fumarate, also known as DMF, is an ester of Fumaric acid with a chemical formula of $C_6H_8O_4$. DMF has good antifungal properties, and has been used as a mould inhibitor in sachets for footwear and furniture. Recently, DMF has been highlighted as being an allergenic sensitiser causing eczema at low concentrations. As a result, member states have voted in favour of a draft European Commission decision to ensure that products containing DMF are not placed on the EU market and a ban on the import of products containing dimethyl fumarate is likely to be enforced.

Dimethyl Formamide

Dimethyl formamide, also abbreviated to DMF, is a volatile organic compound with the chemical formula C_3H_7NO . The most common use of DMF is as a solvent in chemical reactions, primarily in the production of plastics and polyurethane. It also has uses in the manufacture of adhesives, solvent dyes, synthetic leather and surface coatings. Exposure to DMF has been shown in studies by the US Environmental Protection Agency to cause dermatitis, however this relates to acute exposure to DMF in its chemical form, and not to products and articles. The release of DMF into the environment is controlled in Europe under the Hazardous Waste Directive, but there are no plans to restrict the use of DMF in the production of consumer articles now, or in the future.

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REACH regulations

Substances of Very High Concern

The REACH regulations came into force in June 2008, and place restrictions on the use of chemicals in consumer articles and throughout the supply chain. Manufacturers of chemical substances are required to pre-register the substance with the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA). In addition to this, producers or importers of consumer articles, for example toys or furniture, will also be required to notify ECHA if the product (or in certain countries, the product component) contains more than 0.1% of a Substance of Very High Concern (SVHC), and if the article is produced in quantities over 1 tonne.

The proposed SVHC list currently contains 15 chemicals that have been nominated for inclusion by member states on the basis of studies into their intrinsic properties, for example if they are carcinogenic, persistent and bioaccumulative etc. On the 14 January 2009, the ECHA published a candidate list of seven priority substances of very high concern to be included in Annex XIV of the REACH regulations. This means that, once included in the regulations, these seven substances will be subject to authorisation, and registration will be required. The ECHA must receive comments regarding the ECHA's justification for inclusion of the seven priority SVHC by interested parties by the 14 April 2009.

After this time the decision for inclusion will be made, and the Annex will then be updated every second year.

The seven priority chemicals to be considered are:

- 5-tert-butyl-2,4,6-trinitro-*m*-xylene (xylene musk)
- 4,4-Diaminodiphenylmethane (MDA)
- C10-13 Chloroalkanes
- Hexabromocyclododecane
- Bis(2-ethylhexyl) phthalate
- Benzyl butyl phthalate
- Dibutyl phthalate.

Directive 76/769/EC

On the 1 June 2009 the Directive 76/769/EC, which places restrictions on use of substances, such as Azo dyes, will be repealed and replaced by the list of chemicals found in Annex XVII of the REACH regulations. The purpose of this is to harmonise the legislation regarding the "manufacture, placing on the market and use of certain dangerous substances, preparations and articles". The limits and restrictions should not change and the same testing protocols for consumer articles regarding the appropriate restricted substances will still be required.

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