

NEW EUROPEAN DIRECTIVES: VECOM IS READY FOR THE FUTURE

The use of NPEs (nonylphenol ethoxylates) will be banned on 17 January 2005, and the requirements regarding the biodegradability of washing, cleaning and maintenance products will be made even more stringent.

Washing, cleaning and maintenance products are chemical preparations. The properties of these products vary from being of very limited danger to the population and the environment, to irritating, caustic or even harmful. In certain circumstances working with chemical products can accordingly comprise a danger to health or the environment. One of the tasks of governments is to (help) protect the general public against possible dangers, while using laws and regulations to keep the risks involved at an acceptable level.

The most important European directives for substances and chemical preparations are the so-called "Substances Directive" and "Preparations Directive". Both directives impose rules for packaging, labelling and supplying information to users about hazardous substances and preparations in safety data sheets. In addition, rules have been drawn up to protect the general public and the environment against undesirable contact with hazardous substances and preparations. Within the framework of this last directive (2003/53/EC), the European Parliament has decided to ban a number of detergents per 17 January 2005. This also concerns detergents with the general name "nonylphenol ethoxylates" or "NPEs".



Example 1: car and truck wash products

Up to now these NPEs have been used abundantly in washing, cleaning and maintenance products. NPEs have a number of specific properties: a very good dirt-dissolving capacity and very strong emulsifying properties, combined with a low costprice.

The European Parliament decided to enforce this ban after different examinations of the environmental risks of NPEs took place. These examinations showed, among other things, that nonylphenol ethoxylates could have pseudo-eustrogenic properties. In brief, gender changes were observed in certain water organisms that may be related to exposure to NPEs (more comprehensive information about these examinations can be found at: <http://www.eawag.ch/courses/eedc/abstracts.html>).

Besides the ban on the use of nonylphenol ethoxylates, the European Parliament has drawn up a further regulation (648/2004) that concerns all detergents. This regulation has its emphasis on the total biodegradability of these substances. This means that in the near future washing, cleaning and maintenance products may only be manufactured from fully biodegradable detergents, with the objective of reducing the environmental effects and risks these products entail.

These regulations are good news for our environment, but also an enormous challenge for the producers of washing, cleaning, and maintenance products. The changing regulations force these companies to constantly develop their products with great innovation and environmental awareness.

As a producer and supplier of professional cleaning and maintenance products, Vecom has always devoted great attention to the quality and choice of raw materials. The environment and future regulations have long played an important part in the development of new products, and the current line of Vecom[®], Cetemax[®] and TIX[®] products already meet the requirements of the new legislation.



Example 2: internal tank cleaning products

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