

Welcome to Update.....

Feb 2008

Its February and Love is in the air and we are loving working with you. In February's edition of update we introduce the Sure leathermark family of certification trade marks and BLC's comprehensive programme of training courses to be held during March and there are still places available at the Hong Kong conference so book now. If you missed January's update with a feature on eco-leather then please click here.



BLC Training dates..... an opportunity not to be missed

1 day leathersgoods and construction – March 4

Suppliers, leather users and retailers of leathersgoods will all benefit from a greater understanding of the unique characteristics of leather for leathersgoods manufacture, how to get the best from leather products and an insight into problem solving and product failures. The comprehensive content of this course encompasses an explanation of hides and skins, an overview of the leather making process, other materials used with leather, specifications and quality control aspects, construction methods and components and hardware.

1 day eco leather workshop – March 5

With a growing demand for eco-friendly products, this course gives a simple insight into the leather manufacturing process and key factors that determine its environmental footprint, including definition of an eco leather, tanning types, life cycles, biodegradability and environmental auditing. A must for leather users and retailers of leather products across the supply chain.

1 day restricted substances and leather specifications – March 11

In order to ensure that materials and products meet local, national and international legislation, it is necessary to understand the requirements against which products should be tested. With broad appeal to everyone in the leather supply chain, from those involved with the raw material through to retailers of leather products, this course looks at the leather itself, an explanation of restricted and banned chemical substances and international legislation covering product safety as well as covering standards and an in depth look at product specifications and testing.

2 day leather repair – March 12 & 13

Offering a practical opportunity to perfect existing skills and develop new ones, this course takes delegates through the areas of leather recognition and maintenance, the techniques required to produce invisible repairs and recolouring and refurbishment to ensure a professional result. Aimed at manufacturers and retailers of leather upholstered furniture and the leather repair sector, the course combines a theoretical and practical approach.

5 day intensive leather technology - March 17-21

Provides a fundamental understanding of the leather making process, using a range of presentations, team working, practical hands-on problem solving and case studies. This course will equip you with the knowledge to work towards the elimination of technical problems and errors. The skills you learn will give you the ability to identify critical control points and key measures.



Book now at www.blcleathertech.com

Book Now

Hong Kong Conference - April 1 2008

Sourcing Leather With Confidence

[CLICK HERE FOR PROGRAMME](#)

[CLICK HERE FOR REGISTRATION](#)

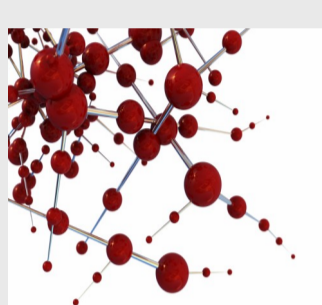


New Resources.....

Arrival of LCMS

To enhance the range and efficiency of chemical testing available, BLC is pleased to announce the procurement of a state of the art LCMS (liquid chromatography with mass selective detection) equipment for the analysis of complex organic materials.

LCMS is a relatively new technique in the field of analytical chemistry. It refers to the combination of liquid chromatographic separation with mass spectrometric detection. The combination of these two powerful techniques gives the chemical analyst the ability to analyse virtually any molecular species; including, thermally labile, non-volatile and high molecular weight species.



LCMS will position BLC as a leading provider of chemical testing in leather and related materials and products. Significantly, the technique will facilitate fast and accurate testing of all target chemicals as well as providing valuable information on unknowns such as odour molecules and contaminants.

BLC has also employed a new head of analytical testing, Ben Halmshaw, who has extensive experience in organic chemical analysis and colour chemistry. Ben will work with the existing chemical team to provide a fast and accurate service in terms of advanced chemical testing to all our customers.

For further information contact Tracey Faulkner on tracey@blcleathertech.com or +44 (0) 1604 679967

Introducing the Sure family



In recent years the consumer market has moved towards requiring an enhanced level of responsibility from brands and retailers for their products. Purchasing decisions are based on factors such as quality, and increasingly on social, ethical, safety and environmental grounds. The Sure family of certification trademarks (registered in the UK and owned by BLC) has been developed to satisfy this growing appetite for credible product assurance and has been derived using years of expertise and experience in leather. Each individual mark denotes a different level of assurance, which allows them to be used as stand alone certification marks or in combination as a suite to demonstrate a holistic view of responsibility and compliance. These marks have been designed to be used at point of sale (for example on a swing ticket or product labelling/packaging) or alternatively as supply chain trading assurance.

LeatherSure

A significant part of the work of any industry body is to maintain and enhance the global reputation of the product created by that industry. The original hidemark (owned and policed in the UK as a certification trade mark by BLC) is still recognised by more than 60% of consumers as a sign of a quality leather product and has become a successful marketing tool for many brands. This mark can be used for all leathers which are tested at BLC and comply with BS 2780: 1983.

QualitySure

Leather has historically been understood by many as being a durable material, but it is a natural material and can fail from time to time. Even though the leathermark certifies that the product is made from genuine leather, it does not prove that it will perform well in the marketplace or necessarily denote suitability for purpose or quality. For this reason, the QualitySure mark can be used on any leather which withstands the suite of physical tests specified by BLC for individual products. The specifications will differ depending on the end product; for example a leather to be used for upholstery will have to withstand different criteria to a leather being used to make a handbag and so on.

ConsumerSure

Restricted substances are an important issue for both manufacturers and consumers due to extensive and complex legislation. The ConsumerSure mark can determine whether a leather it is potentially harmful to the environment or to the consumer. Only leathers which have been tested at BLC and comply with specific requirements will be eligible to be awarded the ConsumerSure mark. This testing regime will consist solely of critical restricted substances including azo dyes, formaldehyde, pentachlorophenol and chrome VI. There are two different specifications for this leathermark; one for general leather and one for automotive leather.

MetalSure

With the introduction of more stringent restrictions for baby and child products, a further level of safety assurance is desirable. Although the MetalSure mark is not purely for children's products, this is likely to be the industry which will benefit most from its presence on their labels. The testing needed for this leathermark is for compliance to limits on total heavy metal and chrome VI content within the leather. This mark may also be used to certify a leather or product as being chrome-free.

EcoSure

In the current climate of environmental awareness there is a requirement to understand the environmental credentials of a leather and the leather making process. The EcoSure leathermark is designed as a credible marketing tool to aid the sourcing of leather and to demonstrate environmental compliance at point of sale. The specification of testing includes an environmental audit, which is based on the Leather Working Group audit and a restricted substance testing regime. For more information on eco-leather click here.

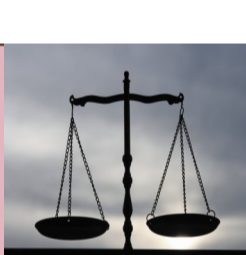
Conclusion

BLC has a vision that the new Sure family of leathermarks will soon become globally recognised as certification trademarks to denote quality, environmental stewardship and product safety.

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Legislation

NPEO - Where do you stand?



Nonylphenol (NP) is not a single chemical compound, but a term used to refer to a family of compounds all of which have a central aromatic (benzene) ring and a nine carbon side chain.

Surfactants related to NP are known as nonylphenol ethoxylates (NPEO) (see Figure 1). Alkylphenol ethoxylates (APEO) is the term used to describe the group of organic substances of which NPEO is one. These are mainly used as washing and cleaning agents (i.e. surfactants). These are non-ionic surfactants of particular interest currently as they are suspected to accumulate in the environment. They are thought to persist in rivers and their sediments, and also are concentrated by wildlife such as fish and birds leading to contamination in their internal organs at much greater levels than in the surrounding environment.

It should also be noted that NPEO and their degradation products are not produced naturally. The mechanism for degradation of NPEO in a wastewater treatment plant is complex, however generally there is breakdown to compounds that are more toxic than the original compound.

EU Directive

The European Directive 2003/53/EC (amending the Council Directive 76/769/EEC) relating to the use of NP and NPEO is now in force. This applies within European communities to restrict the use of these compounds.

The Directive states the following:

'(Nonylphenol and Nonylphenol ethoxylate) May not be placed on the market or used as a substance or constituent of preparations in concentrations equal or higher than 0.1% by mass for the following purposes: Textile and leather processing except; Processing with no release to wastewater, Systems with special treatment where the process water is pre-treated to remove the organic fraction completely prior to biological waste water treatment (degreasing of sheepskins).'

Other applications are also restricted by the legislation, including industrial cleaning, domestic cleaning, metal working, pulp and paper manufacture, cosmetics, personal care products and pesticides and biocides.

BLC Recommendations

It is clear that the legislation relates only to the preparations that may be used during leather production. The limit is not intended as a restriction on the final leather or product. There have been some cases where the levels of NPEO in consumer products have caused concern (see case study). Therefore many Eco-labels and Brands are introducing their own limits for the presence of NPEO in their final products. The limits imposed vary in each case (from 1000ppm to 30ppm).

Whilst there is currently no officially recognised test (CEN, ISO or IULTCS) for the determination of NPEO, BLC has developed a method to analyse for these in leather samples. To ensure that NPEO has not been used within processing we currently recommend that the finished leather should contain less than 100ppm NPEO.

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Services offered at BLC.....

The perfect fit

BLC offers a comprehensive, technical and commercially focused fit assessment service for both children's and adult footwear. This service, developed in response to market demands and significant interest from customers, is provided by qualified shoe fitters and adds an important dimension to the already extensive range of footwear testing services available from BLC.

The standard turnaround time for fits is 3 working days, with an express next day service available for a premium.

For further information contact Dean Ashworth on dean@blcleathertech.com or +44 (0) 1604 679954

Coming up next time.....

All you need to know about Light Fastness



Disclaimer BLC Leather Technology Centre Ltd has made all reasonable efforts to ensure the accuracy of the information provided. However, the information should not be relied upon as legal advice or regarded as a substitute for legal advice. Due care and attention should be exercised when using this information.

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