

The Fair Trading Act

# Fibre content labelling



There is a consumer information standard requiring most textile goods supplied in New Zealand to be labelled with fibre content information. Having information about the fibre content of clothing or other textiles helps consumers to use and care for them appropriately.

## The consumer information standard regulations set the official consumer information standard for fibre content labelling

The Consumer Information Standards (Fibre Content Labelling) Regulations 2000 (Regulations) set standard AS/NZS 2622:1996 *Textile products – Fibre content labelling* with amendments as the official consumer information standard that suppliers of new textile goods must comply with.

We use the term ‘consumer information standard’ in this fact sheet to refer to the official consumer information standard AS/NZS 2622:1996 (as amended) that is identified by the Regulations.

Failure to comply with the consumer information standard is a breach of the Fair Trading Act and is illegal.

Standards NZ revise standards periodically. However, your legal obligations do not change until the Regulations are amended to refer to the revised standard. This may not happen at the same time. When the Regulations are amended, we will update our fact sheet. Even if the Regulations do not require you to comply with the most recent standard, we encourage you to look at the revised standard and adopt any additional labelling requirements.

**FIBRE CONTENT**  
80% WOOL  
17% NYLON  
3% SPANDEX

## Who must comply with the consumer information standard?

The consumer information standard applies to any person who supplies, offers to supply or advertises the supply of new textile goods. This includes:

- manufacturers, importers and distributors who supply new textiles to retailers
- retailers who sell new textiles instore, at markets or online to customers.

## What textile goods are covered by the consumer information standard?

Most textile goods such as clothing, socks and hosiery, fabrics and carpets must be labelled with fibre content information. Second-hand textile goods are excluded.

The following items are not required to be labelled with fibre content information:

- footwear and textile materials used in the manufacture of footwear (eg, insoles)
- goods made up from fabric selected or provided by the customer
- belts, corsets, handkerchiefs, hats, household cloths
- miscellaneous goods such as artificial flowers, bags and cases, shoelaces and toys.

A complete list of items that do not require fibre content labels is set out in Schedule 1 of the Regulations.

## What are the labelling requirements?

The standard AS/NZS 2622:1996 is very detailed. Suppliers should read both the Regulations and the standard for the complete information on labelling textiles with fibre content information.

As a guide, the standard sets out two methods for labelling most textile items:

- listing the names of the fibres and their percentages from the highest to the lowest percentage (eg, 80% cotton, 20% elastane).
- listing the names of the fibres in order of the amount contained in the fabric (eg, cotton, elastane).

Some textiles, such as linings, pillow fibre fillings, piece goods and yarns need specific fibre content labelling. For more information, see the Standard AS/NZS 2622:1996 *Textile products – Fibre content labelling*.

The labels must be in English and easy to read. Each letter must not be less than 1.5mm high.

Other Standards which can assist in providing accurate fibre content labels are:

- *Labelling of clothes, household textiles and furnishings* (AS/NZS 2392:1999)
- *Textiles – Natural and man-made fibres – Generic names* (AS/NZS 2450:1994)

## Do I need to name fibres that make up less than 5 per cent of the total?

When an item contains different fibres that individually make up 5% or less of the total, they can be:

- listed by name
- listed as 'other fibres'
- not mentioned at all providing the fibres do not add up to more than 5%.

## What names can be used on the label to identify the fibres?

Ordinary (generic) names must be used to identify fibre content. Do not use trade names, eg, use elastane not Lycra, on your fibre content labels.

You can find the generic names for textiles listed in the Standard AS/NZS 2450:1994 *Textiles – Natural and man-made fibres – Generic names*.

## Can I describe an item as 100% pure or all?

You can only describe a textile item as 100%, pure or all if the textile good contains only one type of fibre.

## Where must the label be positioned on the textile good?

Guidance on where the label should be placed is available in the standard AS/NZS 2392:1990 *Labelling of clothing, household textiles and furnishings*. Most clothing should be labelled at the top centre back of the garment. The label must be easy to find by consumers examining the item.

If an item comes in more than one piece (eg, a suit) and both pieces have the same fibre content, they only need one label.

Where the label is inaccessible because of the way the goods are packaged, displayed, or folded, the information must also be provided in one of these ways:

- a removable ticket or label attached to the item
- a pamphlet with the product
- a label on the wrapping or packaging.



## Does the label have to be permanent?

Yes, most textile goods require permanent fibre content labels. The label should be durable, which means it should remain readable and attached to the item through its useful life.

Some goods (such as baby bibs, hosiery and household cleaning cloths) do not need a permanent label but they must still provide fibre content information in at least one of these forms:

- a removable ticket or label with the item
- a pamphlet with the product
- a label on the wrapping or packaging.

A complete list of the items that can use a non-permanent label is set out in Schedule 1 of the Regulations.

## Who is responsible for making sure a textile good is correctly labelled?

Although it is likely the manufacturer will supply goods carrying fibre content labels, it is the supplier's responsibility for making sure that the goods supplied, offered or advertised for supply comply with the consumer information standard.

If you are concerned that the fibre content of the good listed on the label is not correct, ask your supplier for more information about the tests that goods have been put through to check the labels and descriptions supplied by manufacturers are correct.



## Can I replace an incorrect fibre-content label with the correct label?

Yes, you can replace an incorrect label with a label stating the correct fibre content. The new label must comply with the consumer information standard.

## What happens if I supply textiles with no labels or incorrect fibre content labels?

It is an offence under section 28 of the Fair Trading Act to supply, offer to supply or advertise for supply textile goods that do not comply with the consumer information standard.

The Commerce Commission, which enforces the Fair Trading Act, may issue you with an infringement notice requiring you to pay a fine of up to **\$1,000**. An infringement notice can be issued by the Commission if it has reasonable grounds to believe you have not complied with the consumer information standard.

If the non-compliance is more serious, the Commission may choose to prosecute you. If convicted, companies are liable to a fine of up to **\$30,000** for each breach of the Act. Individuals can be fined up to **\$10,000**.

It is also an offence under the Fair Trading Act to make a false and/or unsubstantiated representation, or mislead your customers about the fibre content of the goods you have for sale. For example, you will breach the Fair Trading Act if you advertise a sweater labelled as pure wool when it is made from a wool/acrylic blend. The Commerce Commission may take a prosecution against you for misleading labelling. Companies can be fined up to **\$600,000** for each breach of the Act. Individuals can be fined up to **\$200,000**.

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🔗 For more information on the range of enforcement actions, from warnings through to prosecutions, see the Commission's website at [www.comcom.govt.nz](http://www.comcom.govt.nz)  
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### EXAMPLE

A retailer was fined for selling shawls with labels falsely describing the product as a 'pashmina' with '70% pashmina and 30% silk'. Independent tests showed that the shawl was actually made of cotton and polyester, with no pashmina (a type of goat hair) or silk content.

In this case the retailer sold most of its goods by direct mail. Consumers did not have the opportunity to inspect the goods so had to rely on the accuracy of the descriptions in the retailer's catalogue and website.

## Do textile goods require any other types of labels?

Most new clothing requires country of origin labelling and care labelling. Other textile goods also require care labelling.

Children's nightwear (and a limited range of children's daywear) must comply with a children's nightwear Product Safety Standard, as well as the country of origin, fibre content and care labelling requirements.

Fact sheets for each Consumer Information Standard and Product Safety Standard are available from the Commission's website at [www.comcom.govt.nz](http://www.comcom.govt.nz)

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🔗 For further information on the Fair Trading Act, you can visit the Commission's website at [www.comcom.govt.nz](http://www.comcom.govt.nz)  
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## Where can I get more information on the consumer information standard?

The Standards AS/NZS 2622:1996 Textile products – Fibre content labelling, AS/NZS 2392:1999 *Labelling of clothing, household textiles and furnishings* and AS/NZS 2450:1994 *Textiles - Natural and Man-made fibres* – Generic Names are available to buy from Standards New Zealand by calling 0800 782 632, or via its website: [www.standards.co.nz](http://www.standards.co.nz)

You can access the Regulations and the Fair Trading Act online at the government's legislation website [www.legislation.govt.nz](http://www.legislation.govt.nz) The information on this website is free.

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