

The Fair Trading Act

# Care labelling of textiles and other goods



This consumer information standard requires new textile goods to be labelled with words and symbols that show consumers the correct way to care for them. The labels help consumers become aware of the method and cost of caring for textile goods when they are buying them. By following the care instructions the goods are less likely to be damaged or destroyed and more likely to last for a reasonable period of time.

## The consumer information standards regulations set the official standard for care labelling.

The Consumer Information Standards (Care Labelling) Regulations 2000 (**Regulations**) set sections of the standard AS/NZS 1957:1998 Textiles – Care labelling with amendments as the official consumer information standard that suppliers of many new textile goods must comply with.

We use the term ‘consumer information standard’ in this fact sheet to refer to the official standard AS/NZS 1957:1998 (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.

If you comply with the consumer information standard, you will meet your legal obligations.

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, even if they are not mandatory.

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

The consumer information standard covers most types of new textiles, including:

- clothing
- household textiles, furnishings, upholstered furniture, bedding, mattresses and bed bases
- piece goods and yarns made from textiles (eg, fabrics in standard lengths for sale)
- plastics and plastic-coated fabrics
- suede, skins, hides, grain leathers and furs.

Regardless of whether the good was made in New Zealand or overseas, or was made by machine or hand, it must comply with the consumer information standard.



## What textile goods are excluded?

Textile goods that are excluded from the care labelling requirements of the consumer information standard include:

- PVC coats, handkerchiefs, braces, garters, suspenders, armbands, belts and headwear
- Footwear (except hosiery) and textile materials used to manufacture footwear
- Floor cloths, dish cloths, dusters, cleaning cloths and pressing cloths
- Haberdashery such as elastic, elastic threads, ribbons, zips and velcro-type fasteners
- Jute products
- Goods intended for medical and surgical use as bandages, dressings, sanitary pads, and any materials that form part of manufactured medical and surgical goods.

A complete list of textile goods that are excluded is set out in Schedule 2 of the Regulations.

Suppliers of second-hand textile goods are not required to comply with the consumer information standard.

## Who must comply with the consumer information standard?

Any person supplying, offering to supply or advertising the supply of textile goods must comply with the consumer information standard. This includes:

- Manufacturers, importers and distributors who supply new textiles to retailers
- Retailers who sell new textiles instore or online to customers.

## What information must be on the care label?

The consumer information standard requires all care labels to be legible and in English. Internationally recognised symbols (eg, for dry cleaning) can be used but written instructions are also required. The label cannot use symbols alone to describe how to care for the item.

The care label should cover general cleaning and care instructions, including, where appropriate and necessary textile maintenance (eg, air regularly) and any warnings against inappropriate treatment (eg, do not tumble dry).

The consumer information standard also sets out specific rules for:

- Dry cleaning: there must be dry cleaning instructions and dry cleaning symbols on the label
- Colourfast: there must be a warning if the item is not colourfast
- Tumble drying: there must be a warning if tumble drying would cause shrinkage. Items must not have a 'Do not tumble dry' warning if they can be dried this way
- Trims (eg, a fur collar): if any special treatment is required, the label must specify this
- Ironing instructions may be needed for a 'dry clean only' item, if it can be pressed between dry cleaning treatments.



## How is the correct care information determined?

AS/NZS 2621:1998 Textiles – Guide to selection of correct care labelling instructions from AS/NZS 1957, although not part of the consumer information standard, provides information and useful examples on what care each type of textile requires. It also sets out a useful flow chart for working out the appropriate care instructions.

Suppliers need to be familiar with the information in both AS/NZS 2621 and AS/NZS 2392:1999 labelling of clothing household textiles and furnishings to determine the correct care information for the different types of textiles they supply.

As a guide, the correct care instructions depend on:

- fibre used
- construction and potential for shrinkage (eg, knit)
- colour-fastness
- special treatments applied (eg, fire retardants) or that are likely to be applied (eg, waterproofing)
- design of the item (eg, colourfastness of trims)
- the normal care of the item (eg, dry clean only is not suitable for a cotton/polyester school shirt).

## What are the other label requirements?

There are a number of other requirements for labels, including that they must be permanent, accessible and if the item comes in more than one piece, each piece must have its own label. The requirements are set out in more detail under the headings below.

### Permanent labels

Care labels must be permanent. Labels must be able to withstand the care treatment that item requires. The information on the label should remain readable and the label should remain attached to the item through the item's useful life.

Labels for leather and fur clothing, upholstered furniture and bedding require information to be given on a choice of cleaning methods and instructions for those methods of care.

### Items not requiring a permanent label

Some textile items do not require a permanent label but still need care instructions provided – for example on a label or ticket attached to the wrapping or packaging.

Examples of textiles not requiring a permanent label include:

- fashion accessory items such as collars, gloves, mittens, hosiery, neckwear, incontinence garments, shawls, reversible jackets and fur garments
- babywear accessories such as gloves, mittens, bibs, washable nappies, squares of flannelette, terry towelling or muslin
- drapery items such as face washers, serviettes, doilies, tablecloths, tray cloths and runners, tea towels and place mats
- haberdashery such as elastic, elastic threads, ribbons, zips and velcro-type fasteners
- trims – eg, lace edging
- shower curtains
- gardening gloves.

A complete list of items not requiring a permanent label is set out in Schedule 2 of the Regulations.

### Label must be accessible

The label must be easy to find by consumers examining the item.

Where it is not possible for consumers to see the care label because of the way the item is packaged, displayed or folded, you must also provide the information on:

- a removable ticket, label or pamphlet attached to the goods, or
- the item's packaging or wrapping.

The Standard also sets out specific labelling options for piece goods textiles and for the labelling of yarns – such as the use of removable tickets or labels on wrappings or packaging.

Guidance on where the label should be placed is available in the Standard AS/NZS 2392:1999. Most clothing should be labelled at the top centre back of the garment.



### Items in more than one piece

If an item comes in more than one piece (eg, a suit) each piece must have its own label.

## Who is responsible for making sure goods have a label?

Although the manufacturer or supplier of the goods may supply goods with care labels, the seller is responsible for making sure the goods that are supplied, offer to be supplied or advertised for supply comply with the consumer information standard.

The seller should not assume that goods comply with the consumer information standard because the supplier is offering them for sale. If you have any concern that the goods you supply are not carrying the correct care labels, ask your supplier for more information about the tests that goods have been put through to check the care instructions are correct.

## What may happen if I supply a good with no care label or an incorrect care label?

It is an offence under section 28 of the Fair Trading Act to supply, offer to supply or advertise for supply new textiles that require care labelling 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. If a company receives repeat convictions, directors and those involved in the management of the company can be banned from involvement in the management of any company for a period of up to 10 years.

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)

### EXAMPLES

1. A trader was fined for selling clothing with care labelling provided that only symbols to explain the care instructions. Although symbols can be used, the care instructions must also be in English.
2. A trader sold clothing with the care labelling in Korean. A settlement was reached with the trader who agreed to correctly re-label all the clothing in English.

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Contact us with information about possible breaches of the laws we enforce:

**Phone:** 0800 943 600 **Write:** Enquiries Team, PO Box 2351, Wellington 6140 **Email:** [contact@comcom.govt.nz](mailto:contact@comcom.govt.nz)

## Where can I get more information on the product safety standard?

The Standards *AS/NZS 1957:1998 Textiles – Care labelling*, *AS/NZS 2621:1998 Guide to selection of correct care labelling Instructions*, and *AS/NZS 2392:1999 Textiles – labelling of clothing, household textiles and furnishings* 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) (enter number of Standard as keyword).

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.

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)

## Do textiles require any other types of labels?

Some textiles must also comply with these consumer information or product safety standards:

- new clothing and footwear requires country of origin labelling;
- many textiles require fibre content labelling; and
- children's nightwear (and a limited range of children's day wear) must comply with a Product Safety Standard, as well as the country of origin and fibre content labelling Consumer Information Standards.

Fact sheets are available for all consumer information and product safety standards from the Commission's website at [www.comcom.govt.nz](http://www.comcom.govt.nz)

