Restriction of Chromium VI for Leather Articles in EU REACH Annex XVII

Recently, the European Commission (EC) has issued a new Regulation to establish restrictions on Chromium VI in leather articles.

Regulation (EU) No 301/2014 amends Annex XVII of Regulation (EC) 1907/2006 (REACH) by adding new chemical requirements for Chromium VI compounds in leather articles. The restriction was proposed by Denmark since Chromium VI in leather articles can produce allergic contact dermatitis.

This regulation will apply on 1 May 2015.

Chromium VI, also referred to as hexavalent chromium, is mainly an undesirable by-product generated during a leather tanning process when chrome tanning is employed.

Tanning is a process used to cross-link the collagen subunits in order to increase leather’s dimensional stability, as well as its resistance to mechanical action and heat. Chromium VI itself is not used in the leather tanning process, but can be formed from the use of Chromium III via a chemical reaction, which occurs after the tanning process.

It has been common knowledge for some time now that Chromium VI can trigger allergies. As a sensitizer it will cause allergic reactions even at very low concentrations. Moreover Chromium VI is known to be carcinogenic and has other undesirable effects on health.

Summary of the additional restrictions for chromium VI in leather articles:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Substance</th>
<th>Requirement</th>
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<tr>
<td>Chromium VI Compounds (Entry 47 of Annex XVII of REACH)</td>
<td>• Leather articles coming into contact with the skin shall not be placed on the market where they contain chromium VI in concentrations equal to or greater than 3 mg/kg (0.0003% by weight).&lt;br&gt;• Articles containing leather parts coming into contact with the skin shall not be placed on the market where any of those leather parts contains chromium VI in concentration equal to or greater than 3 mg/kg (0.0003% by weight).&lt;br&gt;• Requirements above shall not apply to the placing on the market of second-hand articles which were in end-use in the Union before 1 May 2015.</td>
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