PFAS Discovered in YKK Waterproof Zippers

COURTESY OF YKK

Two years after announcing its transition to a green waterproofing technology for its zippers in 2021, Tokyo-based trim supplier YKK is still finding traces of per-and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) across its product lines.

"For years, YKK has been working on removing PFAS from our products, initially focusing on water repellant chemicals because PFAS have historically been used within the apparel industry to make garments water resistant," Chris Gleeson, vice president of YKK (U.S.A.) Inc. Global Marketing Group told Sourcing Journal. "More recently, YKK tested our entire supply chain for PFAS and realized that PFAS was in the paint used on some YKK products."

The company proactively notified its customers of this finding and transitioned to PFAS-compliant paint as of September this year, he added. "YKK has been diligently working to stay at the forefront of this complex and ever-changing regulatory landscape [and] will continue to monitor it to ensure we remain compliant," Gleeson said.

"We are committed to responsibly sourcing our materials and meeting PFAS regulations," he said.

As a supplier to thousands of apparel brands, YKK aimed to get ahead of looming legislation by axing PFAS from its product offerings, announcing a partnership with non-toxic chemical solutions provider Green Theme Technologies (GTT) in July 2021. YKK said it would replace PFAS compounds with GTT's water-free, non-toxic Empel water resistance technology on its zippers as a part of its long-term sustainability strategy.

"While YKK is known for strong internal research and development, we are always looking for innovative new technologies to complement our own," Terry Tsukumo, vice president of YKK Global Marketing Group, said at the time, praising Empel's ability to provide durable water protection without the use of harmful chemicals.

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U.S. lawmakers are advancing legislation that would outlaw the use of “forever chemicals” across many consumer products, from waterproof outerwear to non-stick pots and pans. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has designated two of the most widely used PFAS chemicals, perfluorooctanesulfonic acid (PFOS) and perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA), as hazardous substances under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA). The law could expose apparel manufacturers to cleanup costs should PFAS chemicals used during production end up in the surrounding environment. Meanwhile, in California, apparel companies will have to warn shoppers before exposing them to products that contain PFAS chemicals when Proposition 65 takes effect on Jan. 1, 2025.

Many outdoor brands that have long used inputs containing PFAS are working to replace them ahead of the legislative deadlines. Earlier this year, Patagonia announced that it would phase out PFAS from its DWR finishes by 2025. REI, too, implemented new product standards for its more than 1,000 brand partners selling cookware and textile products like apparel, footwear, packs and bags, to take effect in fall 2024. Expedition-level outerwear makers will have until fall 2026 to comply with the retailer’s new Product Impact Standards. In July, Dick’s Sporting Goods announced plans to eliminate PFAS from its private labels.

Link

https://sourcingjournal.com/topics/raw-materials/pfas-ykk-chemicals-waterproof-zippers-rei-patagonia-epa-legislation-462977/

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Imports Reveal Depth of Apparel's Destocking Debacle

A WORKER WORKS ON AN ASSEMBLY LINE TO PRODUCE GARMENTS FOR EXPORT ORDERS IN LIANYUNGANG, EAST CHINA'S JIANGSU PROVINCE, JUNE 27, 2023. **COSTFOTO/ NURPHOTO VIA GETTY IMAGES**

U.S. textile and apparel imports declined again in August, continuing an ongoing trend in the sector, according to the Office of Textiles and Apparel of the U.S. Department of Commerce (OTEXA).

According to OTEXA, imports of cotton, wool, man-made fiber, silk blends and non-cotton vegetable fiber textile and apparel products slid by 5.5 percent, comparing August 2023 with August 2022. This is less than July's 9.3 percent year-on-year decline.

In apparel alone, the decline was dire: 19.1 percent for August 2023 over August 2022, a number somewhat consistent with the decline of 18.2 percent for the month previous, July 2023 over July 2022. For January through August 2023, total apparel imports to the U.S. declined by 26.8 percent.

The numbers reflect the inventory problem the apparel sector has been working to address all year.

Of the top 10 major exporters to the U.S., six saw decreases in the month over month numbers that were somewhat consistent with decreases over the first eight months of 2023. Leading the pack with the steepest decrease was Bangladesh. It saw a decline of 30.8 percent comparing August 2023 with August 2022, and a similar decline of 31.1 percent for the period of the first eight months of 2023 over the same period the year before.

The two next largest decreases were seen in Egypt and Turkey. Exports from Egypt to the U.S. dropped 25.5 percent comparing August 2023 with August 2022, yet total textile and apparel exports jumped by 73.3 percent between January and August of this year. Turkey's shipments to the U.S. dropped 20.7 percent comparing August 2023 with August 2022, and declined some 39 percent between

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January and August of this year. It is likely still feeling the effects of the devastating earthquakes and aftershocks that shook the southern and western regions of the country and parts of Syria earlier this year, killing 50,000 people and causing widespread damage to an area that is home to a sizable slice of the country's garment industry.

Increasingly a supplier of choice for many diversifying away from China over forced labor issues, and where many Chinese manufacturers are headed to take advantage of cheaper workers, Vietnam was down 16.1 percent August 2023 over August 2022, and also down 25.6 percent between January and August of this year. Labor however is not as cheap as it once was in Vietnam, and paired with inflation it saw a cutback in garment orders.

China also saw a downward trajectory. Its shipments to the U.S. declined by 11.4 percent, August 2023 over August 2022, but double that number, 22.2 percent, comparing the first eight months of 2023 with the first eight months of 2022.

The biggest winner in the recent trade numbers was the Czech Republic. Exports to the U.S. from the Eastern European nation jumped 110.6 percent August 2023 over August 2022 but showed increases of only 14.0 percent for the period, January to August 2023 over the same period in 2022.

Mexico's slice of the export pie increased by 40.5 percent, August of 2023 over August of 2022, and was up 48.1 percent in the period January to August 2023 over the same period in 2022. The increases suggest that nearshoring investments could be bearing fruit as companies focus on close-to-market manufacturing.

Malaysia saw a 0.9 percent decline in exports to the U.S., after a year-on-year increase of 172.4 percent in July 2023 compared with July 2022. Malaysia is seen as a transshipping destination for companies trying to avoid any implications with Xinjiang, the region of China targeted by the UFLPA or Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act.

Link

https://sourcingjournal.com/market-data/import-export/august-2023-apparel-textile-imports-otexa-china-bangladesh-mexico-vietnam-459958/

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US EPA finalises sweeping PFAS reporting rule

Data call-in encompasses 1,460 substances, omits typical exemptions

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The US EPA has unveiled its long-awaited TSCA PFAS reporting rule, compelling companies to provide information on over 1,460 compounds with no exemptions for article importers or small businesses.

The TSCA section 8(a)(7) action announced yesterday will give companies 18 months to submit an array of details about per- and polyfluoroalkyl substance (PFAS) production, processing and use going back to 2011, with an extended compliance timeline for smaller article importers. The wide-ranging one-time obligation – promised in the agency's PFAS roadmap – encompasses byproducts, impurities, intermediates and research and development (R&D) compounds.

The resulting information "will be a game-changer", according to agency chemicals office head Michal Freedhoff. The mandated details address chemical identity, applications, volumes generated and processed, byproducts, environmental and health effects, worker exposure and disposal.

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The rule "will provide EPA, its partners and the public with the largest-ever dataset of PFASs manufactured and used" in the country, the agency said. This "can be used by EPA, as well as state, local and tribal governments to craft policies and laws that protect people from dangerous 'forever chemicals'".

Submitters must utilise the EPA's Central Data Exchange electronic platform, the agency said. It is creating a CDX tool to accept reports during a 6–12-month window, starting late next year.

Originally expected last January under a deadline set by the 2020 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), the final rule was delayed as regulators took a closer look at the 2021 proposal's impact on small entities and amended some provisions.

More PFASs, more time

The final rule reflects several adjustments to the proposal based on feedback from the public and a small business advocacy review (SBAR) panel, with the EPA aiming to gather comprehensive details on the persistent compounds, while reducing associated regulatory burdens.

For instance, the rule incorporates 41 additional reportable compounds by applying a more recent definition of the substance class (see box), the agency said.

"At least 1,462 PFASs that are known to have been made or used in the US since 2011 will be subject to the final rule, better capturing the important data the agency needs to protect human health and the environment."

Meanwhile, companies have 18 months after its effective date – 30 days after publication in the *Federal Register* – to complete online submissions. Small entities reporting solely on imported PFAS-containing articles have an extra six months. The proposal had suggested a one-year compliance period for everyone.

"EPA believes additional time for rule familiarisation and data collection is warranted given the lookback period of this rule and that there are entities that are potentially covered by this which have not been previously required to respond to other TSCA section 8 reporting rules, such as CDR," it said.

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Modified reporting elements

Although the EPA did not grant exemptions urged by industry, the rule offers streamlined submission forms for article importers and makers of R&D compounds below a 10kg annual threshold. These stakeholders "may not know or be able to ascertain all information being requested", the agency said.

Moreover, joint submissions are allowed when an importer does not know a chemical abstracts service registry number (CASRN) or specific identifiers like an EPA accession or low volume exemption (LVE) number.

The agency also removed a few proposed data elements to decrease potential duplication of effort. The final rule does not ask for certain maximum PFAS amounts or molecular structures for class 1 substances on the TSCA inventory, for which the agency already knows this.
But the rule does bring some expanded obligations.

It calls on businesses to share a generic name or description that indicates fluorination if the specific chemical identity and trade name are unknown, as well as any analytical methods. Furthermore, it seeks information on exposure duration for both the worker with the longest daily period and with the greatest yearly frequency.

The American Chemistry Council criticised the rule's broad reach and lack of an articles exemption. "This programme represents an unprecedented request for information, both in terms of the amount and type of data requested as well as the number of years subject to reporting," the ACC told Chemical Watch. The higher sum of compounds now captured "increases the burden on industry and further fosters uncertainty in the marketplace about which substances are or will be included in the reporting requirements and how industry must meet them", it said.

Link

https://chemicalwatch.com/844512/us-epa-finalises-sweeping-pfas-reporting-rule

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