

Dunlop announces full compliance with REACH regulations



At a time when the use of harmful and potentially lethal substances used in manufacturing is a cause of growing concern, Netherlands-based Dunlop Conveyor Belting has announced that it has achieved full compliance with REACH, the European Community regulations on chemicals and their safe use.

REACH (registration, evaluation and authorisation of chemical substances) regulation EC 1907/2006 came into force on 1 June 2007. All European manufacturers (not just those who make conveyor belts) are legally obliged to comply with the regulations relating to the use of chemicals, preparations (mixtures) and substances used to create a finished product. Although not commonly known by consumers, the use of every potentially hazardous raw material element listed within the regulations must be registered with ECHA (European Chemical Agency) headquarters in Helsinki. Perhaps not unsurprisingly, many manufacturers have chosen to ignore this legal

requirement, either completely or at least partially because of the impact on production costs.

A wide variety of chemicals are used in conveyor belt manufacturing for various purposes such as accelerators, which are essential for the vulcanisation process. One of the biggest concerns involves the use of short-chain chlorinated paraffin's (SCCP's). REACH regulations stipulate that SCCP's should either not be used at all or at least only used on a very restricted basis because of their category 3 carcinogenic classification and their threat to the environment. The unpleasant smell given off by some rubber products can be a strong indicator that chlorinated paraffin's have been used within the rubber compound.

Manufacturers outside of the EU are not, of course, legally subject to the regulations and are therefore free to use unregulated raw materials and chemicals, even though they may be regarded as extremely hazardous within the European community.

Director of production, Dr Michiel Eijpe believes that Dunlop in the Netherlands is the first conveyor belt manufacturer to achieve full compliance and maintains that complying with REACH standards should be in everyone's best interest. As an additional statement of intent, Dunlop has also appointed a rubber compound engineer who previously worked as a REACH coordinator.