

## Scented candles, reed diffusers and fragranced products

### Introduction

The fundamental aim of REACH is to improve protection of human health and the environment. The Regulation applies to all stages of the EU supply chain, from substance manufacture, chemical use, the production and supply of articles, and import from non-EU suppliers. As such, the REACH regulation affects every stage of the supply chain, all the way down to the retail sector.

Alongside REACH, the CLP Regulation defines hazardous substances and mixtures and lays down classification, packaging and labelling obligations for the EU supply chain. For industrial and professional users, complementing the label is the Safety Data Sheet (SDS), which is regulated by REACH. SDSs must be provided for hazardous substances and mixtures, and for mixtures containing certain substances above relevant thresholds or with EU-wide Indicative Occupational Exposure Limit Values (IOELVs or ILVs). However, they are not required for substances and mixtures destined for the consumer unless a distributor (e.g. a retailer) or a downstream user (e.g. a tradesperson buying from a retailer) requests one.

The REACHReady helpdesk receives a number of regulatory queries regarding scented consumer products such as candles and reed diffusers. Therefore, we have produced this short guide to help our subscribers understand their obligations under REACH and CLP.

### Candles

Candle producers and suppliers often query whether their products are a 'chemical' or an 'article' under REACH. When the ECHA *Guidance on requirements for substances in articles* was updated in 2011, candles were included as an example of a 'combination of an article (functioning as a container or a carrier material) and a substance/mixture' in Appendix 1. The wick (the article) is necessary to create the flame, delivering the mixture (the wax-based fuel, which may also contain additives, colours and fragrances) in a controlled way to the flame; the mixture is used up (burned and, in the case of the fragrance, vaporised) during the use of the candle. Therefore, if the mixture meets the criteria for classification under CLP (since 1 June 2015) the candle must be labelled accordingly. If a distributor or a downstream user requests one, an SDS is required.

Scented candles can contain as much as 8-10% fragrance; many fragrances used in scented products, including candles, are classified hazardous – for example, due to components which may cause harm to the aquatic environment. Scents based on natural essential oils, in particular those based on eucalyptus, bitter citrus, and pine, are often irritants and sensitisers; however, we note that their synthetic equivalents usually carry the same hazards.

According to CLP, substances which may produce an allergic reaction via skin contact or inhalation must be named on the label if present at or above 0.1% w/w (or 0.01% if a sub-category 1A sensitiser). However, if present at or above 1% (0.1% for sub-category 1A sensitisers) the mixture itself will be classified as a category 1 sensitiser and require H317 (skin) or H334 (respiratory) statements.

Candles are also subject to a voluntary European Standard for labelling (EN15494); most major retailers as well as the UK's Trading Standards – and equivalent consumer protection organisations across the EU – expect compliance. Standards also exist for 'sooting behaviour' (EN15426) and fire safety (EN15493) for indoor candles. Companies are advised to obtain and read the definitive publications of these Standards from official sources.

Further guidance is available for candles from some of the UK Trading Standards (e.g. Hampshire Trading Standards <https://www.hants.gov.uk/business/tradingstandards/businessadvice/safety/candles>).

## Reed diffusers

Reed diffusers are essentially small containers of a scented liquid into which the user inserts sticks (reeds) to facilitate evaporation. The solvents may be flammable (e.g. in the case of alcohols) or pose an aspiration toxicity hazard (e.g. in the case of oils); some carrier liquids may carry other hazard classification such as skin or eye irritation. Essential oils and other components of the fragrance may pose hazards to the aquatic environment; they are also often irritants and/or sensitisers.

If the overall mixture in the reed diffuser meets the criteria for classification under CLP, the liquid must be packaged and labelled accordingly. If a distributor or a downstream user requests one, a SDS is required. Labelling obligations apply not only to the consumer packaging (the box, which contains the reeds, the bottle of scented liquid and, usually, a leaflet) but also to the bottle as the immediate packaging of the chemical. However, small containers of less than 125 ml may benefit from some labelling derogations, such as omitting the hazard and precautionary statements linked to category 2 and 3 flammable liquids.

If there are sensitisers present at or above 0.1% (or 0.01% for sub-category 1A sensitisers), then the special labelling rule to name those substances, per Annex II to CLP, applies; if present at or above 1% (0.1% for sub-category 1A sensitisers) the mixture itself will be classified as a category 1 sensitiser and require H317 (skin) or H334 (respiratory) statements.

## Further information

The principles outlined above apply to other scented, non-cosmetic products such as air fresheners. If your company is making, importing or supplying scented homeware mixtures you must classify in accordance with the CLP Regulation. If the mixture meets the hazard criteria in CLP, you must also label in compliance with the Regulation. Even if your mixture is not itself classified, there may still be mandatory supplemental labelling information, such as the naming of sensitisers, as laid out in Annex II to CLP.

If you need help understanding your obligations contact us at [enquiries@reachready.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@reachready.co.uk). As a Gold subscriber you can receive regulatory support and guidance through our Helpdesk. We can also put you in touch with Approved Service Providers who can help you achieve compliance. This 'Matchmaker' service is free of charge and is available to all REACHReady subscribers, with priority given to our Gold subscribers.