

First Aid and Health Supplies

Sustainability Insights



Product Description

First Aid and Health Supplies include non-formulated products used for at-home medical treatment or as contraceptives. Product types include self-adhesive bandages, compression bandages, wound pads, gauze, tapes, alcohol swabs, moleskin, rubber gloves, condoms, and diaphragms.

Mission

The mission of The Sustainability Consortium (TSC) is to improve the sustainability of products when they are made, purchased, and used, with a focus on manufacturers and the retail buyers who decide what products to carry in stores. The information in this document is drawn from our detailed research on known and potential social and environmental impacts across product life cycles. TSC acknowledges that other issues exist, but we have included here those that are most relevant to the decision making of retail buying teams and manufacturers. The topics are listed alphabetically for ease of reading; the order does not represent prioritization or other criteria.

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Consumers

Consumer Health and Safety

Manufacturers should formulate products to contain ingredients in accordance with applicable safety standards and should perform any necessary assessments on ingredients and formulations. Manufacturers should list ingredients in accordance with regulatory requirements and communicate proper usage and disposal instructions to consumers in a clear and accessible fashion.



Managing the Supply Chain

Pollution

Processing of raw materials during wood pulp and fabric production uses chemicals that, when released into the environment, can adversely affect human health and the environment. These effects can be mitigated by programs, practices, and technologies that optimize chemical usage, in combination with systems to recover waste produced during raw material production.

Sustainable Forestry

Unsustainable paper pulp sourcing can result in deforestation, decreased biodiversity, land and water degradation, and climate change impacts. Manufacturers should source paper pulp from suppliers that have been verified by a credible certification program for sustainable forestry practices.



Use of Resources

Climate and Energy

Component processing can consume significant amounts of electricity and energy, leading to greenhouse gas emissions. Manufacturers should procure from suppliers that help abate these impacts by measuring, tracking, and reporting energy use

and greenhouse gas emissions, with a focus on reduction. They should also perform preventative maintenance on equipment, replace inefficient equipment, use renewable energy sources, and encourage efficient energy behaviors throughout their operations.

Packaging

Packaging design should be optimized to ensure that packaging performs its essential functions of containment and protection while minimizing use of materials, energy resources and environmental impacts across the life cycle of the packaged product. Under-packaging and over-packaging can both lead to increased impacts. These impacts may be mitigated by using more energy-efficient manufacturing, selecting recyclable and sustainably managed renewable materials, and encouraging consumer recycling.

Water

Component processing for first aid and health supplies can use a significant amount of water, which can contribute to freshwater depletion and may be problematic in water-stressed regions. Manufacturers should procure components from suppliers who measure water use and perform water use assessments throughout their supply chains in order to map water risk in different geographical regions and mitigate impacts associated with freshwater depletion. Manufacturers should assure that water pollution is avoided throughout their supply chain, including where local government monitoring is lax.