



Product Description

Plush Toys include products used for play and as collectibles, made primarily of textiles, synthetic or natural fiber fills, and other soft materials which may be powered or unpowered. Product types include dolls, figures, and stuffed animals.

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.

Sustainability Insights



Consumers

Consumer Health and Safety

The materials used to create plush toys may contain heavy metals, such as lead or cadmium, or chemicals that may pose a risk to children who are exposed to them during play. Manufacturers should work with their supply chains to ensure safe materials and final products by excluding hazardous materials from their products, understanding their raw materials, assessing alternatives when needed, and routinely testing to ensure final products meet safety standards.



Managing the Supply Chain

Pollution

Processes required to make plush toys can result in harmful wastewater and other types of pollution from the manufacturing facilities. Manufacturers should engage with their supply chains to encourage best practices and technology adoption to properly treat wastewater and other potential pollutants from factories.

Water

Manufacturing textiles for plush toys uses large quantities of water, which may be contaminated during textile processing, and reuse and treatment of this water can be difficult. Manufacturers should engage with their supply chains to ensure that best available technologies and processes are used to minimize water use, increase reuse, and prevent hazardous wastewater creation.



Use of Resources

Climate and Energy

Textile processing and toy manufacturing, and the manufacturing

of batteries used in powered toys, consume significant amounts of 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.

Disposal and End-of-Life

Batteries disposed of in landfills can leach harmful chemicals into the soil and water. In addition, waste management and recycling workers may be exposed to harmful materials if batteries and other accessories are not removed from a toy before it is thrown away. Manufacturers should design toys so batteries are easy to identify and locate, and inform consumers of their options regarding battery recycling.

Material Efficiency

Manufacturing plush toys requires plastics made from crude oil, which can impact both the environment and human health when sourced and used. Manufacturers should design toys so that they have a long life and can be reused or passed on to others. They can also optimize sustainable types and quantities of materials used.



Workers and Communities

Forced or Child Labor

In some areas, there is a risk of forced or child labor, characterized by actions such as trafficking, withholding wages or documents, and restricting workers to the work site. Manufacturers should implement codes of conduct for their suppliers, audit facilities across their supply chain, and publicly report their performance, to help ensure that there is no use of forced or child labor.

Workers

Workers may be exposed to hazards in the workplace. In some parts of the world, their rights to freedom of association, equal opportunity and treatment, and fair wages may not be protected. To help ensure worker health, safety, and labor rights, final product manufacturers should have a documented health and safety management plan, including a chemical management plan where needed, and provide safety training and personal protective equipment to workers. Manufacturers should procure materials from suppliers that address worker health and safety and labor rights transparently and should perform audits when needed.