

Moratorium on Environmental Label for Wall Paint

At the meeting of the Environmental Label Jury (Jury Umweltzeichen) in December 2017, the German Environment Agency informed the Environmental Label Jury about the state of affairs regarding the isothiazolinones used as in-can preservatives for wall paint and set out its considerations about future requirements for this preserving agent in products with the Blue Angel environmental label. With interior wall paint bearing the Blue Angel environmental label it is currently possible to use methylisothiazolinone (MIT), chlormethylisothiazolinone (CIT) and benzisothiazolinone (BIT).

Isothiazolinones are effective in-can preservation agents that however have different levels of skin sensitising properties. In other words, intensive and longer skin contact with these substances can induce a sensitisation with people with a corresponding predisposition, by which longer contact with the allergen can cause contact dermatitis. The German Environment Agency has taken this into account from the very beginning in the criteria for awarding the label, and chose a procedure for protecting consumers that permits only particular isothiazolinones as preserving agents in the smallest active concentrations – significantly smaller than the usual quantity used (primary prevention). These preserving agents are also to be declared on the wall paint container, including the names of the substances, so that consumers can be informed and protect themselves by choosing alternative products if necessary (secondary prevention).

In the meantime, the white matt interior wall paints on the market are conserved by means of a higher pH level, and therefore require no additional in-can preservatives. In contrast, even the latest technological progress does not make it possible to dispense with in-can preservatives for silk-finish and pigmented paints.

The Environmental Label Jury discussed the state of play in depth. It has decided that – until overhauled award criteria have been adopted for interior wall paint – new contracts with the Blue Angel environmental label may only be concluded for matt white wall paint if the wall paint has not had any isothiazolinone (MIT and / or CIT) added as in-can preservative. The jury also recommends that the pH level be declared for these wall paints and that corresponding protective measures be recommended for when handling the paint. In-can preservatives should continue to be approved for medium gloss, silk finish and pigmented wall paint. The aim is to achieve a phasing out of methylisothiazolinone (MIT) and chlormethylisothiazolinone (CIT) as active in-can preservatives in the end product that is interior wall paint.

The award criteria will be overhauled in 2018. The *Environmental Label Jury* will decide on the new award criteria in December 2018.

February 2018