



CONSUMER AGENCY'S GUIDELINES ON SAFETY REQUIREMENTS FOR CANDLE PRODUCTS AND RELATED INDICATIONS

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Consumer Agency's guidelines

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Legislative basis:

- Product Safety Act 914/1986
- Decree on Information Regarding Consumer Goods 97/1987

Target groups:

- businesses
- testing laboratories
- control officials

CONSUMER AGENCY'S GUIDELINES ON SAFETY REQUIREMENTS FOR CANDLE PRODUCTS AND RELATED INDICATIONS

The Consumer Agency of Finland issues the following guidelines on safety requirements for candle products and related indications. These guidelines are based on the Product Safety Act (914/1986) and the Decree on Information Regarding Consumer Goods (97/1987).

Candle products sold to consumers must meet the safety requirements in these guidelines from this day on. Indications must conform with these guidelines by 1st January 2003 at the latest.

Director General


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GUIDELINES ON SAFETY REQUIREMENTS FOR CANDLE PRODUCTS AND RELATED INDICATIONS

1. GENERAL

These guidelines are based on the Product Safety Act (914/1986) and the Decree on Information Regarding Consumer Goods (97/1987) as well as market control practice, the results of control tests and the overall evaluation of risks.

The Consumer Agency has tested different types of candle products for several years. Requirements and guidelines concerning their structure and materials are intended to ensure consumers' safety and to prevent fires.

In preparing these guidelines, the Consumer Agency has taken into consideration opinions expressed by officials, testing laboratories and businesses.

A candle product is defined as any product which works like a candle, such as ordinary candles, tea lights, gel candles, candle lamps, outdoor candles and torches, memorial candles, garden candles, oil candles, oil lanterns and lamps, mosquito repellent candles and similar products, candle gels and candle wax sold to consumers, as well as candlesticks and candle rings.

Required indications are by nature warnings or instructions. Their purpose is to draw consumers' attention to the proper use of candle products. **Indications must be on the product or sales package or supplied with the product, for example inside a lamp, so that they are sure to reach the buyer of the product. Indications must be in Finnish and Swedish.** The form of indications is not compulsory, with the exception of mosquito repellent candles and similar products, which are subject to the Pesticides Act (327/1969), and lamp oils, which are subject to the Chemicals Act (744/1989).

Businesses must also comply with the safety requirements in these guidelines as well as general provisions concerning fire safety in their advertising.

2. REQUIREMENTS UNDER THE DECREE ON INFORMATION REGARDING CONSUMER GOODS

According to the Decree on Information Regarding Consumer Goods (97/1987), sales packages must supply at least the following information if this information is not obvious without opening the package:

- the trade name of the product,

- the name of the manufacturer or the one for whom the product was manufactured, in the latter case preceded by the word(s) “valmistuttaja/tillverkad för” (=manufactured for)
- the quantity contained.

The address of the manufacturer and/or name and address of the importer should preferably be indicated as well. In the latter case, the importer’s name must be preceded by the word(s) “maahantuojaja/importör” (=importer)

The following information should also be supplied if this is necessary to ensure consumers' health or financial security:

- information on the composition of the product,
- cleaning and maintenance instructions,
- instructions for use and storage,
- information on any risks related to the use and disposal of the product.

3. INDOOR CANDLE PRODUCTS

Examples: ordinary candles, candle lamps, tea lights, gel candles. Candle products in this category are meant to be used indoors but can also be used on a balcony or porch, for instance.

A candle product is classified as a candle lamp if the edge of the container is higher than the surface of the candle before burning. This includes candles in pots, mosquito repellent candles, lamps with chafing candles and traditional stable lantern models.

In addition to the requirements and indications in this section, the requirements and indications in section 4 should be applied as necessary.

No lead wire or PVC (polyvinyl chloride) plastic may be used in the wick of a candle product intended for burning inside.

Candles may not contain flammable parts such as dried flowers, bits of fruit etc.

Candle materials must not sputter.

Any part of an indoor candle product which the consumer is likely to touch when moving the product, as well as the base, any hook or other supporting surfaces, should not reach such a high temperature that it might burn the skin or damage materials on which a lamp is hung. A supporting surface is defined as any surface or part of a candle product which is liable to come into contact with other materials. Furthermore, the exhaust air from a lamp should not reach such a high temperature that it might cause damage as described above. A temperature of 60° C is assumed to be sufficient to cause burns.

Indoor candle products should not flare up when used properly. In a flare-up the entire surface bursts into flame.

Tests are conducted to simulate a flare-up caused by a match or other object falling into a candle. In a flare-up no part of a candle lamp or container should exceed a temperature of 180° C. This is the point at which flammable fabrics and paper start to burn. If a candle product flares up, the flame should not be appreciably higher than normal. Gel candles, candle containers and candle lamps should not break in tests.

If a candle product is scented, this must be indicated.

If tea lights come in arrangements, they must be separated from each other by at least 3 cm. This must be taken into account in designing candle products and in indications.

Practical tests have shown that if the volume of a traditional candle lamp is smaller than 1 dm³ (1 litre), the surface temperature will rise to a dangerous level. Key safety factors for gel candles are sufficient surface size and container thickness.

Ordinary candles such as straight candles should be accompanied by the indications in section 2 but do not require special indications.

Indications for candle lamps and gel candles:

- Do not place the candle in contact with flammable materials.
- Do not drop foreign objects such as matches into the candle.
- Do not leave a burning candle unattended.
- Extinguish the candle by smothering.
- Instructions should also be supplied for using candles if a lamp does not come with its own candle in place.

Indications for tea lights:

- Use only on a non-flammable and heat-resistant surface.
- Keep at a safe distance from flammable materials such as curtains.
- Do not drop foreign objects such as matches into the candle.
- Do not leave a burning candle unattended.
- Do not move a burning candle.
- Extinguish the candle by smothering.
- If candles are arranged in a group, they should be at least 3 cm from each other.

4. CANDLE PRODUCTS INTENDED FOR OUTDOOR USE ONLY

Examples: outdoor candles and torches, memorial candles and lamps, oil and garden candles.

In addition to the requirements and indications in this section, the requirements and indications in section 3 should be applied as necessary. The temperature requirements in section 3 are not applicable, however.

Outdoor candles should be produced so that they do not become too light in weight on burning. An outdoor candle which becomes too light can start a fire if the wind blows it against flammable materials (for example a wall or dry grass).

Candle wicks should not be supported by lead wire or PVC (polyvinyl chloride) plastic.

The surface temperature of an outdoor candle must not exceed 350° C, even in a flare-up. This is the temperature at which wood starts to burn. If an outdoor candle flares up, the flame should not be appreciably higher than normal. The container of an outdoor candle must not break in tests.

Indications for outdoor candles:

- Only for outdoor use. Do not use on a balcony.
- Use only on a non-flammable surface.
- Use only in a non-flammable container or stand, in snow or sand so that the wind will not bring the candle in contact with flammable materials (applies to outdoor candles which become light in weight on burning).
- Indication of safe distance from structures. (For example: Keep at least 1 metre from any building, fence or other structure.)
- Do not move a burning candle and do not leave a burning candle unattended.
- Do not burn the candle in the rain (risk of sputtering).
- Extinguish the candle by smothering.

Indications for memorial, oil and garden candles:

- Use only outdoors.
- Use only on a non-flammable surface.
- Do not leave foreign objects such as matches in the candle when you light it.
- Be careful with hot metal cover (if applicable).
- Do not leave a burning candle unattended (does not apply to memorial candles).

5. OIL LANTERNS, LAMPS AND SIMILAR PRODUCTS

An oil lantern is defined as any candle product which has a wick and an oil reservoir. The wick may or may not be inserted in the reservoir when the product is sold.

The wick of an oil lantern should not be supported by lead wire or PVC (polyvinyl chloride) plastic.

When an oil lantern is ready for use, the wick holder should not be free but should be fixed or attachable to the lantern or lamp in such a way as to keep small children from tampering with the oil and to prevent oil from spilling if the lantern turns over. An oil lantern or lamp which is not ready for use when sold (for example, the wick is supplied separate from the reservoir) is classified as lamp oil, a chemical substance, and the package must include indications required under the Chemicals Act.

Oil lanterns and lamps must be supplied with instructions for use which tell what kind of oil to burn and how to attach a loose wick, among other things.

NOTE: A new European standard "Oil lamps and test methods" (CEN/prEN 14059) is currently in preparation. The requirements in this standard will be applied when it comes into force.

Indications for oil lanterns, lamps and other such products:

- Instructions for use which also tell what kind of oil to burn.
- Use only on a non-flammable surface.
- Keep at a safe distance from flammable materials such as curtains.
- Do not leave a burning lantern or lamp unattended.
- Keep out of the reach of children.
- Lamp oil is dangerous if swallowed.
- Extinguish the lantern or lamp by smothering.
- If the lantern or lamp turns over and starts a fire, try to smother it with a fire blanket, for example. Do not try to extinguish burning lamp oil with water.

Lamp oils are hazardous chemicals and are subject to pertinent legislation with regard to their classification, indications and packaging. Key regulations include the Chemicals Decree (675/1993), the Decision of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health on Classification Principles and Indications for Chemicals (979/1997, amended 1058/1999), the Decision of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health on the Listing of Hazardous Substances (624/2001), the Decree of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health on Safety Caps for Hazardous Chemicals and Warnings for the Visually Handicapped (430/2001) and the Government Decision on Prohibitions and Restrictions concerning Certain Chemicals Posing a Health Risk (428/1998) with appendix as amended.

6. MOSQUITO REPELLENT CANDLES AND SIMILAR PRODUCTS

Examples: mosquito repellent candles, coils and torches.

Candle products intended to repel mosquitoes are classified as pesticides and must be registered by the Plant Production Inspection Centre before they can be sold or marketed. The Pesticides Board decides on the approval of repellents and required indications on the basis of the Chemicals Act and the Pesticides Act. In connection with registration and inspection, steps are taken to ensure that the active ingredient in a mosquito repellent does not pose a risk to health or the environment, but the board does not inspect fire safety.

The safety requirements and indications in these guidelines also apply to mosquito repellent candles and other similar products depending on the type of repellent.

The Finnish Decree on the Production of Biocides, based on Directive 98/8/EC concerning the placing of biocidal products on the market, came into force on 1 June 2000. The approval and registration of mosquito repellents will be shifted from the sphere of pesticides to biocides during a transition period of about 10 years. Any active ingredient which was not on the market in the European Union before 13 May 2000 will immediately be subject to approval under biocide regulations, however. Applications for the approval of mosquito repellents classified as biocides are handled by the National Product Control Agency for Welfare and Health.

7. CANDLESTICKS AND CANDLE RINGS

All candlesticks must be designed in structure and materials so that they do not turn over easily. Candlesticks must be non-flammable and must not pose a risk if the candle burns down completely.

Candle rings should preferably be made of non-flammable materials. If the material is flammable, the candle ring should be supplied with a warning not to let the candle burn down completely.

8. CANDLE GELS AND WAX SOLD TO CONSUMERS

Candle gels and wax sold to consumers and intended for making candle products should be supplied with instructions for use based on the requirements concerning safety and indications in these guidelines.

Candle gels must also be supplied with the warnings required for gel candles.

9. ENTRY INTO FORCE

Candle products sold to consumers must comply with the safety requirements in these guidelines as of 15 October 2001.

Indications for candle products must comply with these guidelines as of 1 January 2003 at the latest.