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## **UK safety experts reveal worrying hazards found in UK safety gloves**

Following market surveillance carried out over two years ago on a number of EC type approved and CE marked leather safety gloves, the UK's leading safety company, Arco, has revealed worrying evidence of carcinogenic dangers found in a number of safety gloves still available on the market.

In independent due diligence testing initiated by Arco, a sample of a leather welder's glove supplied by one distributor was found to contain illegal levels of Azo dyes, which are restricted substances of very high concern under REACH, due to being both carcinogenic and mutagenic<sup>i</sup>.

What's more, illegal levels of Chromium VI, were also present in the test sample. Chromium III salts are used in the tanning stages of leather production, with Chromium III usually being present in finished products. However, small amounts of chromium III can be oxidised to form the hazardous and restricted Chromium VI. This chemical can cause serious skin irritation and allergic reactions.

The issue of banned substances and hazardous chemicals being present in leather safety gloves is an issue known and acknowledged by the British Safety Industry Federation (BSIF). After Arco first raised concerns over two years ago following its initial market surveillance tests, Trading Standards and BSIF initiated port of entry checks, as a preventative measure to ensure substandard products do not enter the UK. However, results of the most recent tests show that failing products are still making their way into the UK marketplace.

Simon Harrison, Director at Arco, commented: "These findings are truly worrying, especially as these dangerous substances were found in products that are meant to keep you safe. It's not only worrying that carcinogenic substances were found in approved products but it's completely unacceptable. We have revealed alarming findings in the past surrounding the quality of certain

protective equipment, but it's even more worrying to discover the presence of substances that carry such a hidden threat level."

The latest findings reinforce the message that CE markings cannot currently be fully relied upon as a guarantee that PPE is fit for purpose and it is essential employers closely scrutinise their supply chains and challenge suppliers on how they validate their products.

To help employers feel confident that the PPE they are buying is fit for purpose, Arco urges they take the following three steps:

- Ask suppliers for a declaration of conformity showing original certification for the PPE.
- Ask suppliers to define their process for sample testing to ensure safety products continue to meet the required standards.
- Ask suppliers to define their process of quality assurance to ensure products are being manufactured as originally certified.

For further information on Arco's own product assurance and fully accredited testing laboratory, please visit: [www.arco.co.uk/productassurance](http://www.arco.co.uk/productassurance).

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<sup>i</sup> Azo dyes are a banned substance under REACH which are used as a colourant in textiles and leather gloves. Some Azo dyes have been found to be mutagenic - they have the capacity to change genetic material - while others have been declared as carcinogens.

#### **About Arco**

Arco is the UK's leading safety company. It distributes quality products and training and provides expert advice, helping to shape the safety world and make work a safer place. Founded in 1884 and with a heritage spanning four generations, Arco integrates traditional family values with pioneering innovation to offer a world-class range of over 170,000 quality assured, branded and own brand products, including personal protective equipment, clothing, footwear, gloves, workplace safety and hygiene products. Headquartered in Hull, Arco reaches its customers through its extensive product catalogue, interactive website and 48 strong retail store network. The company has sales of over £281m and employs approximately 1700 people. Arco has been accredited a 'One to Watch' status in the Best Companies Times Top 100 Survey.

Arco is dedicated to its Corporate Social Responsibility policy and continually demonstrates its support of local business communities and charitable organisations, donating in excess of 1% of pre tax profits annually. In 2007, Arco became a member of the Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI) and in 2010 a member of Sedex, the Supplier Ethical Data Exchange. Going forward, Arco further demonstrates its position as the UK's leading safety company as the exclusive supplier of PPE, footwear and workwear to the BLOODHOUND project's support team involved with the design, build and race of a car to raise the world land speed record to 800 mph in 2015, and 1,000mph in 2016. For more information, visit [www.arco.co.uk](http://www.arco.co.uk).