

# **ACCORD PHOSPHORUS STANDARD**

**FOR PHOSPHORUS CONTENT AND LABELLING OF  
HOUSEHOLD LAUNDRY DETERGENTS**

**March 2024**

## Foreword

The Australian Chemical Specialties Manufacturers Association (ACSMA) released the Scheme for Phosphorus Content and Labelling of Detergents in 1994. The association changed its name to the Australian Consumer and Specialty Products Association (ACSPA) in 2001 to better reflect its consumer focus and specialty products emphasis. In 2002 the Phosphorus Scheme was updated to take into account the change in the Association's name and contact information. In April 2005, there was another name change to Accord Australasia, and in that same year, the association became the advocate for the hygiene, personal care and specialty products industry.

The Phosphorus Scheme was developed as the laundry industry's contribution to protecting Australian waterways. The NSW Government supported the acceptance of the industry national standard when the Phosphorus Scheme was initiated in 1994.

In the years since it has been in place, and across the changes in the association administering the scheme, there was no change in the content or guidelines of the Scheme until 2013 when, as a result of changes over time in laundry detergent formulations, and to reflect the broader stewardship initiatives of the laundry detergent industry, the Scheme was revised.

This further 2024 revision, to 'retire' the P logo and the 7.8 g phosphorus per wash standard, reflects the widespread further decrease in phosphorus content in household laundry detergents across the mainstream industry. This has been possible following multiple years of innovation and research by the industry into alternative ingredients/formulations that contain less phosphorus/no intentionally added phosphorus but that maintain quality and wash performance.

This revised Accord Phosphorus Standard ('the Standard') establishes the sector-wide benchmark as negligible phosphorus content ( $\leq 0.5\%$ ). The Standard is voluntary. Products that meet the requirements of the Standard are identified by the 'NP' ('Negligible Phosphorus') logo, providing a clear indicator to consumers wishing to take this factor into account when they make a purchasing decision. Manufacturers need to apply to Accord for a licence to use the 'NP' logo on any of their laundry detergents and the licence will only be granted for use on products that meet the requirements of the Standard.

The Standard provides tangible evidence of the laundry detergent sector's commitment to the protection of the environment in general, and Australia's precious waterways in particular.

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## 1. Introduction

Accord Australasia Limited is the peak national industry association that represents the manufacturers and marketers of formulated consumer, cosmetic, hygiene and specialty products, their raw material suppliers, and service providers.

Consumer and specialty products play an important part in the everyday lives of consumers as well as in major industries such as mining, medical institutions, schools and hotels.

Consumers benefit from the use of practical products such as soaps, shampoos and household detergents while the whole community gains from improved hygiene, cleanliness and efficiency.

Laundry detergents are the focus of this document. References in this document to detergents mean household laundry detergents. Accord has approximately 100 members. Those involved in the manufacture and marketing of domestic laundry detergents include:

- Amway of Australia
- Kao (Australia) Marketing
- PZ Cussons

Laundry detergents contain a range of ingredients, some of which have traditionally been phosphates. Phosphorus in phosphates can contribute to eutrophication, which is a process whereby a combination of conditions—nutrient availability, light, warm water temperature, low flow rate and turbidity—trigger disproportionate aquatic plant growth. Blue-green algae blooms are a potential outcome.

In the 1990s Accord (then ACSMA) and its members recognised the seriousness of the blue-green algae issue and assisted in finding solutions. For example, Accord worked cooperatively with several State and Federal authorities and funded successful research at the University of NSW to develop practical equipment for the biological removal of phosphorus from sewage.

The initial Accord Phosphorus Scheme came into being in 1994 as an industry contribution to the protection of Australian waterways.

## 2. Perspective

The range of laundry detergents on the market and the ongoing changes in formulations reflect the needs and preferences of many different consumers. They also reflect the desire of manufacturers to meet these demands while producing effective products that take advantage of technological advancements and meet environmental aspirations.

Phosphates, one type of phosphorus-containing compound, have traditionally been used in detergents as ‘builders’. Builders enhance the cleaning efficiency of the detergent by reducing water hardness, preventing removed soil from redepositing during washing, and assisting the emulsifying action of surfactants to remove oily and greasy soils. Formerly, the complete removal of phosphate ingredients from detergents would potentially have diminished the efficacy of the detergent. However, technologies have now advanced such that alternative, effective builders with low or no phosphorus are now widely available.

It must also be recognised that phosphorus in detergents is generally unlikely to become a pollutant of Australian waterways. Sources of phosphorus in Australian waterways vary depending on factors such as land use, geology, population density, rainfall and erosion. Understanding of the relevance of these in the Australian situation has developed in the last decade. Research has shown that the biggest contributor of phosphorus in catchments is naturally derived and strongly associated with soil erosion.

Additionally, since the initial Accord Phosphorus Scheme was introduced, Australian science has made rapid advances in the understanding of algal bloom processes in inland waters and estuaries. For example, it has been shown that stratification (a warm surface layer on top of a cold bottom layer) and light penetration—not nutrient availability—are the major triggers for blooms in the rivers of south-eastern Australia, although nutrient exhaustion does limit the biomass of blooms.<sup>1</sup>

For many years it had also been believed that phosphorus from sewage is more readily taken up by algae than phosphorus attached to soil particles originating from erosion in catchments. It is now known that the bioavailability of bound phosphorus is dependent on the characteristics of the sediment to which it is bound. This has relevance in the consideration of whether the removal of phosphorus from wastewater or a water body is helpful.

In Australia as a whole, detergents have historically made a small and variable contribution to the phosphorus levels in freshwaters. Detergents may enter waterways via municipal sewage streams but are usually minor contributors to the total phosphorus load in sewage; the bulk arises from human body wastes. In some localised areas and under drought conditions, sewage-derived phosphate can be a significant component of the total river load. However, as alluded to above, the removal of detergent phosphates alone will not prevent the occurrence of blue-green algal blooms.

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<sup>1</sup> SALT, NUTRIENT, SEDIMENT AND INTERACTIONS. Chapter 5: Managing algal blooms in Australia. Brendan Edgar and Richard Davis. Land & Water Australia, <http://lwa.gov.au/files/products/river-landscapes/pk071328/pk071328.pdf>

Treatment and recycling of sewage and greywater are components of broader water conservation schemes being developed and implemented in a range of ways around Australia.

Accord recognises that an integrated approach to water care should be taken alongside its Standard. Such an integrated approach may include the following elements:

- reduced water consumption;
- the use of water-efficient appliances in homes, and water-efficient systems and plant in industry;
- recycling of sewage, greywater and industrial wastewater;
- the judicious use of fertilizers in rural areas; and
- the development of strategies for water bodies to manage water flows, manage sediment and light penetration and monitor phosphorus levels so that potential algal bloom trigger situations are avoided.

### **3. The Phosphorus Standard**

Participants in the Standard:

- 1) Agree to a voluntary standard for labelling laundry detergents containing 0.5% phosphorus or less (corresponding to the 'NP' logo).
- 2) Apply for a licence from Accord if they wish to use the 'NP' logo.
- 3) If a licence is granted, will introduce clearly visible labelling in the form of a logo ('NP') which will be displayed prominently on laundry detergents that meet the requirements set out in the Standard.
- 4) Introduce additional labelling (as set out in Section 5) which explains the significance of using the logo in accordance with the Standard.

### **4. Guidelines: compliance criteria for labelling**

A product satisfies the criteria for a licence to use the 'NP' logo if the elemental phosphorus content is less than 0.5% of the content of the product by weight.

Even laundry detergents formulated without phosphorus may contain trace quantities of the naturally occurring element. This means that there may be an incidental amount of phosphorus that is not part of the product formulation and is present only as a consequence of manufacturing.

Dispute resolution: ‘NP’ logoed product

If a single pack of a product exceeds 0.53% phosphorus by weight, the product does not comply with the Standard and the licence to use the ‘NP’ logo will be immediately cancelled.

If the analysis of a single pack is between 0.5% and 0.53% phosphorus by weight, then a composite sample of ten (10) packs should be taken.

Equal aliquots of laundry detergent product are to be sampled from each of the 10 packs (including the first) and the 10 aliquots are to be thoroughly mixed together. Two samples are to be taken from this composite and analysed for phosphorus.

If the average of duplicate analysis from the composite sample is greater than 0.5% by weight, the product does not comply with the Standard and the licence to use the ‘NP’ logo will be immediately cancelled.

**5. Guidelines: logo use**

If a licence has been granted for the use of the “NP” logo, the logo must be displayed prominently on the packaging of the domestic laundry detergent product to clearly indicate compliance with the Standard to consumers.

The following guidelines apply to the logos to ensure that they are easily seen and understood by consumers, and are always used in a consistent manner.

There are four minimum sizes for the logo corresponding to the area of the face of the package where the logo will be placed. The object is to maximise the logo size, consistent with the area available and pack graphics. The label area for non-rectangular labels (e.g., bottles) is calculated by multiplying the maximum height by the maximum width and ignoring cut-outs.

<u>Minimum logo height (mm)</u>	<u>Surface area (cm<sup>2</sup>)</u>
10	≤150
15	>150 and ≤250
20	>250 and ≤650
25	>650

The logo must not in any way be coupled with a product brand name.

The logo artwork will be supplied by Accord when a licence to use the trade mark is granted and the Trade Mark Licence Agreement is signed by both parties.





### On-Pack Information

The consumer will become aware of the presence of the 'NP' logo at the time of purchase. Other information that the consumer may require would be:

- what the logo represents
- the actual phosphorus level

This additional information will be provided on the back or side of the pack either:

- near dosing instructions;
- in the ingredients listing, or
- in an environmental information panel.

The information will take the following form:

A small replica of the 'NP' logo or the words 'Phosphorus Content', followed by the most appropriate words from the below options:

- a) 'This product contains no added phosphorus. Levels below 0.5% may be present.'
- b) 'This product contains less than 0.5% phosphorus.'
- c) 'This product contains no added phosphate. Phosphorus levels below 0.5% may be present.'

## **6. Guidelines: administration of the Phosphorus Standard**

The Standard will be administered by Accord. The 'NP' logo design is registered as a Trade Marks under the *Trade Marks Act 1995* (Cth), giving Accord the exclusive rights to use the logo. Other entities may only use the 'NP' logo with Accord's express permission.

When a manufacturer wishes to use the logo, the company must apply to Accord. A Director of the company making the application must provide information regarding the phosphorus content of the product in the form of Attachment 1 to this document. Accord will review the application and license the use of the logo to the applicant if the product meets the requirements of the Standard by entering into a Trade Mark Licence Agreement.

The details set out in the application will be confidential. However, any *bona fide* enquirer will be advised of the manufacturer's name and phosphorus level or range of any product for which a licence has been granted to use the 'NP' logo.

The logo will be available to any manufacturer, distributor or importer, whether an Accord member or not. If Accord becomes aware at any time that the standard is not being met by a product bearing one of the logos, the licence to use the logo will be immediately cancelled.

The fee for the licence to use the logo will be a one-off cost to cover the administrative work. This will be waived for active and financial members of the association.

## **7. Guidelines: products covered by the Phosphorus Standard**

The Standard applies to household laundry detergents only and is entirely voluntary. Laundry detergent products that contain more than 0.5% phosphorus are not eligible for inclusion under the Standard or to licence the 'NP' logo but there is no regulatory or legal impediment to the production and sale of such products.

Household laundry detergents produced by Accord member companies contain no intentionally added phosphorus. Accord member companies have committed to the ongoing formulation of this category of products without phosphorus.

## **8. Guidelines: process for applicants**

1. Read this Standard of Practice and Guidelines in full.
2. Apply to Accord for a licence to use the logos, using the form attached as 'Attachment 1' to this document.
3. If Accord agrees to grant a licence a Trade Mark Licence Agreement will be forwarded for completion.
4. The applicant company is to return the completed, signed and witnessed Trade Mark Licence Agreement to Accord, together with the licence fee (if applicable).
5. On receipt of these items Accord will check the application and signed Trade Mark Licence Agreement. Provided these meet the requirements of the Standard, a copy of the Trade Mark Licence Agreement, signed on behalf of Accord, together with a copy of the 'NP' logo suitable for reproduction, will be sent to the company.
6. The company is obliged to keep Accord's records updated by completing and returning 'Attachment 1' for any new laundry detergent products they wish to include in their Trade Mark License. They should also inform Accord of products deleted from their range or no longer compliant with the Standard.

## **Consumer information**

Further information may be obtained from the Accord website [www.accord.asn.au](http://www.accord.asn.au) or the major laundry detergent manufacturers. Their contact details appear on product labels.

***Attachment 1: Application for license***

**APPLICATION FOR PERMISSION TO USE  
THE ACCORD 'NP' LOGO AND LABELLING FORMAT  
FOR A HOUSEHOLD LAUNDRY DETERGENT**

(To be completed by a Director of the applicant company)

I \_\_\_\_\_  
Name Title

of \_\_\_\_\_  
Company Name Address

request permission to licence the Accord Logo specified below under the terms of the Trade Mark Licence Agreement for labelling of the following products

Brand Name	Phosphorus concentration in the product (%)

I certify that the label(s) for the product(s) listed above will comply with the requirements set out in the document "ACCORD PHOSPHORUS STANDARD for Phosphorus Content and Labelling of Household Laundry Detergents".

Signed .....

Date.....

Return the complete form to:  
 jsemp@accord.asn.au

Accord Australasia Ltd  
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 Broadway NSW 2007