

Phosphorus Standard Revision – Retirement of ‘P’ logo Q&A

When was the Phosphorus Standard first launched?

The original Phosphorus Standard was launched in 1994 by Accord’s forerunner, the Australian Chemical Specialties Manufacturers Association. The NSW Government supported the acceptance of the industry national standard when the Phosphorus Scheme was initiated.

Why was the Phosphorus Standard developed?

The Phosphorus Standard was developed by the laundry detergents industry as part of its contribution to protecting Australian waterways. The Standard set the industry standard for the maximum phosphorus per wash in household laundry detergents.

Why is the ‘P’ logo being ‘retired’?

There has been a significant shift in household laundry detergent formulations over the past 30 years. Previously, builders (an important class of laundry detergent ingredients) were phosphorus-based and these could not readily be removed or substituted whilst retaining effective laundry detergent performance. Thus, most household laundry detergents contained some phosphorus to ensure that the products were effective at cleaning laundry items.

However, household laundry manufacturers have invested in extensive R&D over the years, resulting in innovative new household laundry detergent formulations that perform effectively without requiring phosphorus-containing ingredients.

As a result, all mainstream household laundry products that are available in Australia are now formulated to contain negligible phosphorus (< 0.5%), as denoted by the ‘NP’ logo. The ‘P’ logo, which reflected products that contained a maximum of 7.8 g phosphorus per was, is effectively obsolete.

What standard does the 2023 version of the Phosphorus Standard set?

This revised Accord Phosphorus Standard establishes the sector-wide benchmark as negligible phosphorus content ($\leq 0.5\%$).

This is an important step that reflects the state of the Australian market and recognises the industry’s commitment to ongoing innovation and environmental sustainability.

Do products have to comply with the Phosphorus Standard?

It is important to note that the Phosphorus Standard remains a voluntary standard. However, the Standard has achieved a high level of acceptance and uptake over the past 30 years—as reflected by the use of the NP logo on all mainstream products as well as many niche products.

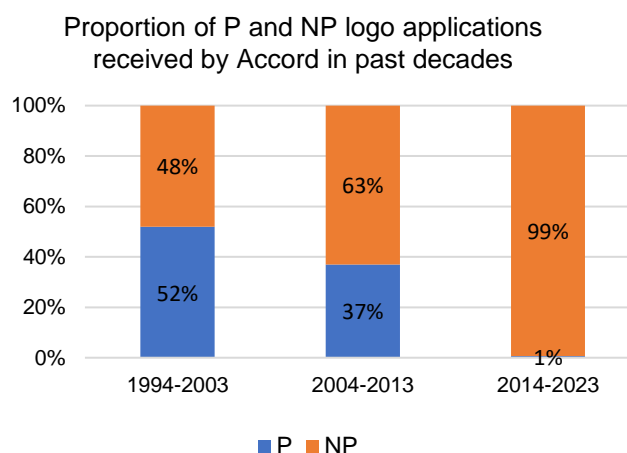
And, although developed by Accord, the Phosphorus Standard is available to all household laundry manufacturers, not just Accord member companies.

Will phosphorus-containing household laundry detergents re-enter the market now that the P logo has been retired?

Accord is confident that there will not be an influx of phosphorus-containing household laundry detergents to the market following the retirement of the 'P' logo. There are numerous reasons for this confidence.

First, almost all products available on the mainstream market bear the 'NP' logo. This can be verified by checking the shelves of any of the major supermarkets in Australia. This achievement is the result of years of reformulation and development to achieve high-performing products without the need for phosphorus-containing ingredients.

Unsurprisingly, the applications received by Accord over the past 30 years record a pronounced decline in the use of the 'P' logo. The adjacent chart reflects the number of applications received by Accord for the 'P' and 'NP' logos in each of the past three decades since the Phosphorus Standard was launched in 1994. As can be seen, in the past 10 years virtually all applications have been for the 'NP' logo; the one application for the 'P' logo in the most recent decade was in 2016 (and this product now bears the 'NP' logo).



Second, all major laundry product manufacturers and supermarkets in Australia publicly committed to removing phosphates from their laundry detergents/shelves in 2014. *Please see attached article.* There would be no reason to reverse this position and risk the consumer backlash.

Third, phosphorus-based laundry detergents are now outdated technologies for the household market. With effective cleaning performance now being achieved without phosphorus, there is no reason for companies to 'wind back the clock' and undo years of investment in reformulation.

How do companies access the 'NP' logo for use on their product/s?

All companies that use the 'NP' must have entered into a formal Licence Agreement with Accord, which sets out the requirements for use of the logo.

Manufacturers must then apply to Accord for use of the 'NP' logo on their household laundry detergent/s. This use will only be granted for use on products that meet the requirements of the Standard.

How can I get more information?

Please contact Dr Jennifer Semple, Accord's Manager of Sustainability & Education Programs, at jsemple@accord.asn.au