



VOC Legislation

Advice for interior decorators.

VOCs include solvents and plasticisers, added to paints, plasters and other decorating products to assist with viscosity, flow and drying times.

However, high concentrations of VOCs are a major contributor to interior air pollution and have been linked to various health issues, including headaches, sore eyes, respiratory complaints and the possible impairment of our immune systems.

European Union directive 2004/42/EC states that from January 2010, all adhesives, fillers, paints, primers and decorative materials must contain no more than 30g per litre of VOCs.



From 2007, all Sto water based primers, paints and plasters meet or exceed the standards of the EU directive, with many products independently tested as VOC Free.

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Frequently Asked Questions

Q. What are VOCs?

VOC stands for "Volatile Organic Compound". The European Union classifies a VOC as any organic compound with an initial boiling point less than or equal to 250°C. VOCs typically emit vapour, which can contribute to air pollution.

Common VOCs include solvents and plasticisers, which have various benefits in product manufacturing. As well as the painting and decorating industry, VOCs can also be found in the following products:

- Carpets
- Laminate flooring and flooring adhesives.
- Vinyl wallpapers.
- Furniture polish, parquet wax.

The combined VOC content from interior sources is a significant contributor to interior room pollution, which can lead to a number of health problems for building users after prolonged exposure.

Q. What is EU directive 2004/42/EC?

As part of its effort to tackle global warming and health issues, the European Union directive 2004/42/EC was created to minimise, monitor and control the harmful effects of VOCs.

By January 2010, any water based product with VOC content manufactured in Europe (including primers, adhesives, fillers, paints and plasters), cannot exceed more than 30g of VOC content per litre of the total volume.

All EU member states have signed up to the regulations, and are committed to reduce VOC content in all products.

Q. How are VOCs measured in products?

In the UK, VOC content is measured in accordance with ISO 11890. This measures VOC content above 0.1%.

Building with conscience.

VOCs are an important environmental issue that we at Sto take very seriously. Sto acts in accordance with our guiding principle, "Building with conscience", preserving buildings and respecting the interests of people and nature.

Q. How are products labelled for VOC content?

Manufacturers are required by law to provide clearly communicated labelling on products highlighting the VOC content. For example:



EU limit value for this product (cat. A/a):
75g/l (2007) / 30g/l (2010).

This product contains max. 30g/l VOC tinted/
white contains max 0.5g/l VOC

Q. How is VOC content categorised?

While categories vary between manufacturers, many paint manufacturers use the following 5-tier scale:

Minimal VOC content	0 - 0.29%
Low VOC content	0.30 - 7.99%
Medium VOC content	8 - 24.99%
High VOC content	25 - 50%
Very high VOC content	50% or above

The EU directive allows for products in the "Low VOC content" category. As this tier is so broad, and product densities vary, Sto advises anyone involved in specification to select products within the "Minimal VOC content" category to ensure the products meet the regulations.

Q. How does Sto test its products?

All Sto products are independently tested by the TÜV, who have set the highest standards in Europe for VOC content testing.



For broadwall paints, the maximum VOC content to be considered "VOC Free" is less than 100 parts per million, or less than 0.01% VOC content.

Our continuing research and development into sustainable, environmentally safe products means that you can be safe in the knowledge that our products meet existing environmental safeguards.

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