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Hand crafted soaps and toiletries are very popular, but how do you know if they are safe or legal?

The manufacture and sale of soaps and toiletry products must comply with the Cosmetic Products Safety Regulations. This applies to ALL cosmetic products supplied in the UK & EU, whether for consumer or professional use, supplied through traditional retail outlets, craft or farmers' markets or to private purchasers online via mail order.

Cosmetic items manufactured for personal use are exempt from the regulations.

There are numerous requirements that manufacturers/sellers must meet under the regulations, however two key requirements of the regulations are:

- 1. All products must be registered with the newly founded Cosmetics Products Notification Portal (CPNP)**
- 2. Finished cosmetic products must undergo a safety assessment by a suitably qualified person, generally a chartered chemist, before they can be placed on the market. This must be documented**

These are both legal requirements – they are not optional! If you are a market or other outlet manager have you asked and verified that any crafters applying to sell at your venues are trading legally?

Rogue traders damage legitimate businesses.

The CPNP is an online notification system designed to be accessed by medical professionals who are dealing with a patient who is believed to be suffering from a reaction caused by any particular cosmetic product. It is also used by local authorities to check that a trader has registered. In the UK this local authority is Trading Standards. The system requires all producers to register certain information about their products.

It is free, but it is compulsory for all producers to use it. Based on feedback from Guild members and other anecdotal evidence we estimate that a high proportion of sellers are not in compliance with the regulations, and are therefore trading illegally.

Your local Trading Standards (TS) office usually has a dedicated cosmetics safety officer. Anyone selling cosmetic products without having the legally required safety assessments in place, or who is failing to meet other legal requirements, is liable to have their products confiscated, being investigated and facing potential prosecution.

There are many myths in circulation about the sale of cosmetic items – some popular ones are:

- Organic products are exempt (they aren't)
- I'm not a business, I'm not selling much so I don't have to have an assessment for my products (not true)
- I was trading before the regulations came into force, therefore I'm exempt (again, not true)

These myths are perpetuated in many chat rooms and online forums, often by people who are unaware of the regulations or who have never actually read them.

The FACT is that the sale of cosmetics is subject to a strict regulatory process, anyone failing to abide by the regulations is breaking the law. Its worth repeating that illegal traders damage legitimate businesses.

BETTER SAFE THAN SORRY – ASK THE QUESTIONS

If you are a market or events manager, and someone applies to sell hand-crafted soaps or toiletries at one of your stalls or outlets, there are 2 key questions that should be asked to help you to ensure that they are selling legally:

- **Is the seller registered with the Cosmetics Products Notification Portal (CPNP)?**
- **Does the seller have safety assessments for their products?**

A sensible precaution would be to ask your local Trading Standards office to verify that any applicants are CPNP registered.

By taking these simple steps you help ensure that the public can visit your market or outlet and buy with confidence from your sellers. Uncertified products could well be unsafe and unfit for human use.

Consumers are entitled, indeed encouraged, to ask the same questions.

Note that it is the seller's responsibility to provide evidence that they are in compliance with the regulations. In the event of any queries regarding the regulations you should in the first instance speak with your local Trading Standards office.

Why risk it? Ask the questions!

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Disclaimer: Although care has been taken in compiling this information you should refer to your local Trading Standards office for guidance before taking any action as a result of the information contained in this letter

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