



Top chains are urged to ban sandblasted jeans

Telegraph.co.uk

Sarah Butler, 9:16, Monday 21 March 2011

Asda (NYSE: [WMT](#) - [news](#)), Diesel, Matalan and Primark are among a group of companies being criticised for selling jeans made using sandblasting, which can cause illness or even death.

The pressure group, Labour Behind the Label, said these companies continue to use sandblasting to give denim a "worn" look, despite the danger that silica dust from the sand can get into workers' lungs. British companies including New Look and Marks & Spencer (Dusseldorf: [MA6.DU](#) - [news](#)) also say they have banned the process. Levi's and H&M (Stockholm: [HMB.ST](#) - [news](#)) stopped all use in December

"Dead workers aren't fashionable," said Sam Maher, co-author of Labour Behind the Label's Killer Jeans report, which will be published on Monday.

"The trend for killer jeans must be phased out by companies and rejected by consumers with immediate effect." It is also calling on retailers and brands to compensate workers who have been made ill by operating sandblasting machines in the past.

Matalan told The Telegraph that it currently uses sandblasting on some denim products. It said safety standards were constantly under review and it would "take action if necessary to protect the welfare of our suppliers' employees".

Asda said it was in the process of phasing out sandblasted products. "It's our intention that there will be none on sale in our stores by the end of this year," a spokesman said. Diesel said it would stop using sandblasting on its clothing from early next year and Next (Xetra: [779551](#) - [news](#)) said it had stopped all new orders. Both said suppliers were required to meet safety standards. Primark said it had halted sandblasting at more than half of its previous suppliers and expected to be out of 90 per cent by the end of the year.

Primark suggested some rivals had been less than honest in their promises. A spokesman said: "A ban is only meaningful when capable of being enforced and carefully monitored. Too often companies impose bans without any real attempt to implement them properly."

But a spokesman for international clothing workers' union ITGLWF said: "In the space of a year workers could contract silicosis. We need to just stop this."

Retail (Santiago: [RETAIL.SN](#) - [news](#)) vacancies at Telegraph Jobs