



## Levi's, H&M ban sandblasting on jeans

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Levi's and H&M, two global fashion brands, have decided to ban sandblasting, a controversial technique used to make jeans look "worn," the firms announced on their websites.

Scientists, unionists and some nongovernmental associations, particularly in major manufacturer countries such as Turkey, India and China, say the widespread technique causes the lung disease silicosis.

"At Levi Strauss & Co., we've put in place some of the strictest standards and monitoring programs in the industry to ensure that workers who produce our jeans are not subjected to the risks related to silica," Levi's said in a report on its website last week. "But we recognize that there are factories – often linked to counterfeit operations – that do not apply these same safeguards. And because they don't rigorously enforce proper health and safety standards for sandblasting, they put unsuspecting workers at risk."

Calling the problem as a serious industry concern, "Even though we at Levi Strauss & Co. are confident in our practices, we've decided that the best way we can help ensure no worker – in any garment factory – faces this risk is to move to end sandblasting," the company said.

The company designs and markets products for the Levi's, Dockers, Signature by Levi Strauss & Co. and Denizen brands.

A Swedish company, H&M, is joining Levi's decision to stop sandblasting.

"H&M has had health and safety requirements for sandblasting for several years. Like all other Code of Conduct requirements, the monitoring of sandblasting practices has been part of our extensive Full Audit Program," said Karl Gunnar Fagerlin, production manager at H&M, according to a report on the firm's official website. "At the same time, [ensuring] that these standards are being observed by all of our suppliers and their subcontractors has proven too difficult. In order to make certain that no worker producing denim garments for H&M risks his or her health, we have decided to quit purchasing and retailing sandblasted products," he said.

In addition to H&M, the group includes the brands COS, Monki, Weekday and Cheap Monday as well as H&M Home.

Effective immediately, H&M and Levi Strauss & Co. will not place any new orders for sandblasted products, according to the reports.

"There are other ways to achieve a worn finish," the release by Levi's said. "We're confident our customers – no matter how they like the finish of their jeans – feel the same way."

"The lungs of denim sandblasting workers die away from the denims that are worn by our sons and



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daughters," said Ali Çetin, the general director of the Federation of Consumer Associations, or TÜDEF, at a press conference in Ankara in June. A statement from the Labor Ministry's Labor Inspection Board to the Social Security Institution, or SGK, recommended in August that denim sandblasting workers with silicosis be classified as retired by disability, even if they do not have any social security.