

The Secondary Materials and Recycled Textiles Association (SMART) is issuing the following statement in regards to recent reports of certain governments imposing restrictions on used clothing, including bans on the importation of secondhand clothing or other internal restrictions on the sale of used clothing.

“Like so many others around the world, SMART and its members are engaged in the world-wide fight against a common enemy, COVID-19. SMART and its members are committed to working with governments, businesses and individuals to slow the progression of this disease and to protect the most vulnerable among us.

While there is still a great deal that is unknown about this virus, SMART is dismayed to see some governments opportunistically seizing upon this crisis to impose import and other restrictions on the sale of secondhand clothing in their countries. In many cases, these restrictions are coming from locations that have previously attempted to restrict the sale and distribution of used clothing in an anticompetitive contravention of international trade law.

Numerous studies including those published in the [New England Journal of Medicine](#) and [The Lancet](#) have shown that COVID-19 may be detectable on hard, non-porous surfaces like plastics and metals for hours and potentially up to 2 to 3 days. The virus, however, is far less likely to survive on soft, porous surface like textiles including rugs, carpets and clothing, new or used. [As recently issued guidance from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\) on COVID-19](#) notes, mitigating whatever small risk might be present on soft, porous surfaces like textiles is easily addressed by laundering the textile/garment according to manufacturer instructions in warm water. This advice is supported by the fact that countless hospitals and other medical facilities are utilizing reusable linens and personal protective equipment/hospital apparel to protect healthcare workers that are treating patients infected with COVID-19. Notably, the CDC has not made any changes to existing guidance on how these textiles should be handled and processed since the outbreak of COVID-19 in the United States.

SMART is particularly concerned about recent reports of import restrictions being imposed on secondhand clothing citing the risk of COVID-19 transmission. Used clothing that is shipped overseas is typically in transit for weeks if not months at a time, far longer than the virus has ever been shown to survive on even the most hospitable non-porous, hard surfaces. Further, [the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention notes](#) “Currently there is no evidence to support transmission of COVID-19 associated with imported goods and there have not been any cases of COVID-19 in the United States associated with imported goods.”

As noted previously, attempts to limit these imports appear to be a disingenuous attempt to choke off secondhand clothing trade. Unfortunately, those who will suffer the most under these draconian restrictions are the people who rely upon access to high-quality, inexpensive secondhand apparel as well as those who base their livelihood on domestic industries that support its sale and distribution.

As such, SMART is working to identify and track the imposition of these kinds of unwarranted restrictions and will continue to work closely with U.S. government officials to see that they are lifted.”

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