

## STANDARDS

In Mexico, a wide number of products are covered by mandatory product standards known as *Normas Oficiales Mexicanas (NOMs)*, Mexican official standards. Textiles, apparel and accessories are covered by *NOM-004-SCFI-1993*. Technically, the burden of compliance with these standards falls on the importer, but in most cases Canadian exporters must provide the documentation. Products subject to *NOMs* must be tested in Mexico and a certificate of compliance obtained from the *Secretaría de Comercio y Fomento Industrial (SECOFI)*, Secretariat of Commerce and Industrial Development. The certification number must be included on apparel labels, along with the *NOM* logo. Textiles and apparel are exempt from the requirement that a certificate of compliance accompany the goods when they cross the border, presumably because of this additional labelling requirement. These regulations are subject to frequent change. Exporters should ask the importer to provide details of the latest regulations well in advance of shipment.

## PRODUCT TESTING

Under the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), products can be tested at a single accredited lab in any of the three countries to ensure the product meets the standards of all three countries. Canada and the United States have already implemented this arrangement, while Mexico has four years to comply. In Mexico there are three open labs: the *Cámara Textil*, the *Instituto Politécnico Nacional*, Polytechnic Institute and *Inchscape. Aurrera*, the large hypermarket retailer and six of Mexico's largest textiles and fibre companies have their own labs. The importer or the exporter's agent should arrange for testing.

## INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS

The apparel industry relies heavily on trademark protection for its brand names. Certain sewing processes and fabric designs as well as other innovations must be protected before exporters will agree to technology or design transfers. Mexico has recognized this and has introduced more stringent trademark and patent protection laws. Enforcement mechanisms, remedies and penalties are part of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).