

# Don't be Fooled by Green Disguises

## Watch out for Greenwashing Logos



This logo is not sanctioned for finished-product use by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). It is being misrepresented as applying to an organic latex mattress core, rather than truthfully stating that it applies to the RUBBER-TREE CROP ONLY.

There are many steps between growing a certified latex crop in Sri Lanka and presenting it as a “USDA Certified” product to American consumers. Regardless of this fact, some sites are creating phony product designations and saying that their completed mattresses are now “USDA CERTIFIED.”

The USDA currently has no approved manufacturing standard for latex sap. Accordingly, no possible USDA certification can be obtained for a mattress core or for the mattress itself.

**QUESTIONS TO ASK:** Ask the seller to send you a copy (or post one online) of the USDA certification for their finished product or latex core.



Signifies membership in The Green Guide, a pay-to-advertise purchasing guide owned by National Geographic. Dues-paying members receive a listing in the Guide and automatically qualify as “Recommended,” whether their materials, factory, or finished product have passed certification or not. The Green Guide and National Geographic do not test products or materials, and do not offer certification services.

**QUESTIONS TO ASK:** How does National Geographic qualify as an organization that recommends mattresses to the public? What process did your mattresses go through in order to earn the recommendation?



Here's a logo invented by the company that displays it. As of yet, no certification exists for products made in the United States. Sometimes you'll see companies that use one or two raw materials sourced in the U.S. displaying logos saying their products are “Made in the USA.” At OMI, we primarily source our raw materials from the U.S., and we have the only certified organic mattress factory anywhere. Beware of imitators!

**QUESTIONS TO ASK:** Are all the materials in your mattresses sourced within the U.S., as well as your mattresses being made there? What is the name of the organization that awarded this seal?



A perfect example of a valid membership logo being misused by websites to infer an approval by an organization that does not evaluate specific products. Green America is a nonprofit organization that publishes the National Green Pages, a listing of dues-paying member businesses that have been evaluated and approved for inclusion in the Guide. We're members too, but we don't post their logo on our website to infer that our products are approved by the organization.

**QUESTIONS TO ASK:** Ask the site displaying the logo if they are inferring that Green America determined that the site's products or mattresses were approved by them. In recent conversations with Green America, the organization recognized that their logo does have the potential to infer that they approve actual products, which has never been their intent. They are in the process of evaluating the wording on their logo.



Beware of pictures that look as though they might be certification logos, but aren't. This is a common form of greenwashing. Companies post “certifications” such as “Organic Cotton Alternatives,” with clip art to make it look as if they have more certifications than they do. Check to make sure that logos are referencing a trusted third-party certifier.

**QUESTIONS TO ASK:** What is the name of the organization that awarded this designation? Does this mean that your mattresses contain only U.S.-grown, certified organic cotton? What is the name of the organization that awarded this seal?



Greenwashing in the extreme. Far from being a symbol of certification, “Biofoam” is actually the brand name for a synthetic foam made of 20% natural, plant-based materials...and 80% petrochemicals. Would it be worse to use foam that's made from 100% petrochemicals? Absolutely. But to pretend that it's somehow safe for people or the environment is unethical.

**QUESTIONS TO ASK:** Why does your company feel that it is acceptable to sell a product made mostly from petrochemicals?



Another logo invented by a company to describe its own products. This one isn't even referenced or explained by the company on its web site, just posted off to the side under the phrase "Certified Healthy," which doesn't have any meaning. A mattress can't be certified to be either healthy or "eco-friendly," because no such certification exists.

**QUESTIONS TO ASK:** Where can I see a copy of this certificate? What certifying body awarded it?



Another membership organization, this one for the mattress industry as a whole. As with Green America, we're members too, but we don't use it as evidence that we make a purer mattress. Only third-party certifications can do that.

**QUESTIONS TO ASK:** Is the ISPA an organization of organic-mattress manufacturers? What does this logo mean to me as a mattress buyer?



Look at this logo carefully and you'll see the words "contains certified flexible polyurethane foam," a petrochemical oil-based product. And the advantage of having "pure" oil-derived products in an organic mattress is...?

**QUESTIONS TO ASK:** What is Certi-PUR foam certified for? And what is toxic petrochemical foam doing in a supposedly "organic" mattress?



One of the most difficult certifications to obtain in the organic industry, GOTS certification is sought by manufacturers and retailers. Unfortunately, the logo can be abused by companies who meet its standards for one or two of the raw materials they use, then display the logo in a way that leads customers to think the entire manufacturing process is GOTS certified. At OMI, our entire facility and manufacturing process is GOTS certified – through Oregon Tilth.

**QUESTIONS TO ASK:** Which of your materials is GOTS certified? Who certified your facility and/or your products to the GOTS standard?



If our mattresses were full of chemical-based polyurethane foam and synthetic raw materials, we might think about using odor control too. We've tried to figure out what this logo is saying, but so far no luck. It's definitely not a certification symbol.

**QUESTIONS TO ASK:** How is green tea used as an odor control? And why is odor control needed?



With its vague use of the words "ecologically good," this is perhaps the most puzzling of the false certification logos we've encountered. "E-OK" was invented by the company that is attempting to use it to sell mattresses. They offer no explanation, no references, no site to click on – nothing.

**QUESTIONS TO ASK:** Who certified your product "E-OK," and to what standard? May I see a copy of the certificate?



The American Sleep Research Institute focuses on measuring and increasing the quality of sleep. They are not concerned with organic purity in any way, and work with manufacturers of memory foam, waterbeds, and other conventional types of mattresses equally with organic manufacturers.

**QUESTIONS TO ASK:** What does your membership in this organization entail? How do you work with them? Do they offer certification for any of your products or materials?



This is a membership logo, not a certification. Global Green USA promotes “green” building in U.S. cities as a way to combat climate change. They do not evaluate or certify materials or consumer products.  
**QUESTIONS TO ASK:** How do you work with this organization? What do they do? Have they inspected or certified your products or materials?



The organization represented by this logo used to be called the Fiber Council, but has changed its name to the Fiber Forum. It’s an online way for members of the Organic Trade Association to share information and receive updates via email before they’re shared with the general public. We’re members too. It is not a certification, and any member of the Organic Trade Association can belong.  
**QUESTIONS TO ASK:** How does membership in an online forum guarantee that you make a purer mattress?



When you click on this logo, it takes you to test results performed by applying a solvent to a piece of material for a sample identified as “LS Tee” (long-sleeved tee shirt?) for “Lowell Elementary School.” In this sort of test, a piece of fabric or other material is supplied to a lab and dissolved with a solvent. The solvent is then analyzed to see which VOCs might be present against a list of possible chemicals. It is not an air-testing procedure to see what would be breathed in by a person using a mattress made from that material.

In contrast, OMI’s finished product is tested by the GREENGUARD® Environmental Institute. Our finished mattresses are placed inside a vacuum chamber that measures all offgassing for 96 hours to find out what a person using the mattress would actually be breathing. This sort of testing costs tens of thousands of dollars, compared to the type of solvent-based VOC test referenced above that runs about \$100.

**QUESTIONS TO ASK:** Whose logo is this, and what material was tested? How was it tested? How does the testing relate to possible VOC offgassing from a mattress?



Another great example of a meaningless picture that, although it looks nice, doesn’t represent anything. There is no certification for a “Green Process Product,” and the words “eco” and “memory foam” don’t belong in the same sentence, let alone the same word.

**QUESTIONS TO ASK:** What is the “green process”? How exactly is the memory foam you use eco-friendly? Does this represent testing by an independent third party, and if so, may I please see a copy of the testing criteria?



It is not possible to make a mattress “free of chemicals,” since they’re all around us – they make up everything on earth, and are the building blocks of life itself. Even the purest certified organic vegetable is made up of chemicals. To claim otherwise is false advertising.

**QUESTIONS TO ASK:** How can ANYTHING be free of chemicals?



Signifies certification with TransFair USA, a third-party organization that audits products for compliance with Fair Trade criteria. While we support Fair Trade certification, it doesn’t ensure the organic purity of a product in any way.  
**QUESTIONS TO ASK:** In addition to being Fair Trade certified, are your materials, finished product, and factory certified to any organic standard?



This logo from the Virginia Department of Health is accompanied by the following statement: “Our bedding collection is made in Norfolk, Virginia, USA. We purchase domestic from suppliers, stock all raw materials on-site and manufacture the finished goods right here in Virginia-USA.” That’s all fine, but why the logo for the Department of Health and the state seal? That would be like us showing the seal of the State of California along with our certifications. Why would we want to do that?

**QUESTIONS TO ASK:** Does the Virginia Department of Health certify any of your materials or your finished product? Why is the state seal shown on your website?



Virginia Green is a state-run program that encourages businesses to incorporate environmentally friendly practices, primarily in the tourist trade. The company that displays this symbol provides mattresses to hotels, “allowing tourists to fully enjoy a ‘green room’ experience.”

**QUESTIONS TO ASK:** What is involved in your membership with Virginia Green? Does the program screen products for chemical offgassing or require any type of certification?



Simalfa is an adhesive frequently used in the manufacture of mattresses. It is GREENGUARD certified for VOC offgassing and is a credible product. It does not offer any proof of evaluation for any product or material used to make a company's mattresses, however.

**QUESTIONS TO ASK:** Is this being presented as proof of certification? If so, for what?



**PULLING THE WOOL OVER OUR EYES** This graphic is accompanied by the following statement:

“Many mattresses who claim to be “Organic” say they use wool as the flame barrier. While wool would pass the old cigarette test for mattresses, it will not pass the new open flame test. These mattresses either use chemically treated wool, another chemical system, or rely on chemically treated cotton batting (Boric Acid and Antimony) to pass the open flame test.”

On their website, this company claims that wool can't possibly work as a natural flame retardant because it burns when you light it on fire, as their pictures show.

**True or False?** This argument might work if organic mattresses were being made of (or wrapped in) knitting yarn, which does in fact burn easily, but we are aware of no organic mattresses being made that way.

For example, OMI organic mattresses use wool without chemical treatments to meet all state and federal flammability laws. In fact, they were audited for flammability by the Consumer Product Safety Commission and passed with flying colors. Our mattresses have also been audited for fire-standard conformance by the State of California at least five times, and have always passed using only wool.

To say that there are “no natural, chemical free, or nontoxic systems that pass the severe open flame test” is false, and another example of how rampant greenwashing is on the Web.



This Pure Rest-created logo makes the following Purity Guarantee: “If you find a purer mattress anywhere else within 30 days, we will let you keep ours for free.”

Obviously, they're not only claiming to be as pure as OMI, but purer. The problem with their approach is that purity involves more than just certification of materials or ingredients. Production facilities, sanitization of organic materials, and VOC testing of the final product are also critical elements of purity, and need to be verified by accredited independent third parties. No different than the organic food industry.

At OMI, we've been testing our finished products for VOCs and have been GREENGUARD certified since 2006. Our production facilities have been certified to GOTS (the Global Organic Textile Standard) since 2008. We've been sanitizing our organic raw materials since 2003.

**QUESTIONS TO ASK:** Since you don't manufacture your own mattresses, how can you assure consumers that they're made in a 100% GOTS-certified facility or offer some other verification that there is no possibility of cross-contamination, like OMI does? Who makes your products, and where? Is anyone from your company even present during manufacturing? How do you sanitize your organic materials? Who tests your final products for VOCs? How long will it take for me to get my free mattress?

# OMI's Certifications

OMI IS THE "REAL DEAL" – NO GREENWASHING HERE

At OMI, we hold third-party certifications from the following organizations. Please note that these logos represent not just membership, but true third-party inspection and approval:



An organic-only manufacturing environment is critical in preventing cross-contamination from conventional products. Our factory, located in Northern California, is truly unique – the first and only large-scale 100%-organic mattress Eco-Factory™ in North America. Oregon Tilth, the most respected name in organic certification, has certified our entire facility to the Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS). We believe there is no cleaner sewing facility in the mattress industry than our dedicated sewing room. Our Eco-Factory also provides a safe and healthful workplace for our employees.



OMI's latex mattresses are certified to the Global Organic Latex Standard. The Global Organic Latex Standard (GOLS) is a certification available to mattress manufacturers. Peterson Control Union, a globally recognized organic certifier, developed GOLS based on their years of experience certifying organic products in other industries, including foods and textiles. This certification ensures that all materials and manufacturing processes adhere to strict and specific global organic standards.



OMI uses the highest quality wool available that is certified to the Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS). OMI is the first mattress factory in the United States to meet the Global Organic Textile Standard.



Our 100%-natural rubber latex is sustainably harvested from tropical rubber trees and manufactured into mattress cores here in the U.S. It is also naturally antimicrobial and antifungal, creating a naturally healthful, hygienic sleep environment. In addition, our rubber has been independently tested and certified to Oeko-Tex Standard 100, so it's guaranteed to contain no harmful substances. Oeko-Tex is respected throughout the world for its stringent testing methods, guaranteeing the absence of substances that are harmful to human health. At OMI, we offer a truly certified finished product. In 2006, an OMI mattress was the first to be certified by GREENGUARD for low Volatile Organic Compound (VOC) emissions based on its strict purity standards. (We even pass their most stringent requirement, for products designed to be used for children and schools.) No other adult mattress can make this claim.



OMI proved to the Consumer Product Safety Commission in 2008 that it is possible to make a mattress using only our organically-grown wool for flame protection, passing all federal and state flammability requirements without the use of chemical fire retardants.



At OMI, we know it's important to support U.S. organic farmers and manufacturers. That's why we use only Texas-grown certified organic cotton batting in our mattresses and other products. Our cotton is certified by the Texas Department of Agriculture to be in compliance with growing and handling standards set by the USDA National Organic Program (NOP).



IMO, the Institute for Marketecology, certifies our cotton thread to the Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS). IMO is one of the first and most renowned international agencies for the inspection, certification, and quality assurance of eco-friendly products, with more than 20 years' experience in organic certification, natural textiles, sustainable forestry, and social-accountability monitoring.



While there is still no USDA organic standard for manufactured mattress cores (regardless of what you see on the Web), certification does provide a third-party raw-material assurance for latex sap imported from sources outside the USA, which was lacking in the past.

As OMI customers know, raw materials are only one part of the purity process. Preventing non-organic comingling and cross-contamination, as well as using only third-party-certified production facilities and processes, is "the rest of the story."



So don't be fooled by companies claiming to sell a "certified organic mattress" simply because they are buying an organic component from a certified agricultural source. Once the sap leaves the tree there is no third-party USDA organic standard. There is no third-party certification of their processes or facilities whatsoever. These companies' labels should read "Made with USDA-certified organic sap." It's greenwashing, pure and simple. Call to find out which mattresses are available with certified organic latex sap!