

Stay connected with tethered caps

October 1, 2020



Plastics packaging manufacturers are keen to stay ahead of changing EU legislation in order to be a positive influence and supporter of the circular economy. The EU SUP Directive's tethered closures rule for all beverage containers of up to three litres to have lids that 'remain attached' is a reflection of the organisation's 'growing sense of urgency', which also reflects the view of the majority of PET manufacturers.

Packaging converter Retal is driven to meet and exceed EU targets in order to deliver on its customers' CSR targets as well as its own strict goals.

Andzejus Buinovskis, design engineer at Retal, has been deeply involved in the development of the company's tethered cap solutions, a process which has evolved in response to challenges and further information.

"The process of developing and changing has been interesting as we've been in close communication with our beverage brand customers," said Buinovskis. "Their needs are evolving too, so sharing ideas has helped to create solutions that we're really proud of."

Creating advantages

These changing needs have initially seen Retal develop two tethered cap solutions, suitable for both slittable and injected closures, with the results shown at last year's BrauBeviale.

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Buinovskis continued: “Our goal is to have one tethered cap that is suited to all our current portfolio of closures as well as those we are planning to produce while avoiding any duplications of already-patented solutions. Invariably, the solutions from each manufacturer are pretty similar, as we are all working to the same legislations, yet it is in the tiniest of details where we can create an advantage, both for our customers and for their end users.”

Tiny details can bring major benefits, such as increased comfort to the consumer when there are absolutely no sharp edges, intuitive opening, as well as a clear physical ‘realisation’ when the cap is fully open.

Buinovskis added: “Our step-by-step development in balance with our customers has allowed us to create our L-Tether solution specifically for PCO1881 closures, which features a small L-shaped protrusion that offers the two-fold advantages of giving tactile feedback to the consumer that the closure is in its open state, and it also maintains the closure’s top part in an open position. We’re currently in the testing phase with key groups following successful samples appreciated by our customers; we are investigating the transportation to the capping lines.”

Samples are produced in Lithuania and Buinovskis explained that the longer trend of light-weighting still continues alongside EU legislation, so the weight of both the preforms and the closures is under constant analysis.

“We have our own lightweight closure design for the PCO 1881, which is a slitted tamper evident solution that we are working on adopting as a tethered cap too; even when we’ve developed a solution it can evolve, it can be improved,” he said.

Always evolving

The evolving nature of the tethered caps issue sees topics such as the hygiene element of the bottle under closer inspection, with the fact that ‘something is always touching something else’, meaning transmitting contaminants is in focus, especially with the ongoing global pandemic.

Buinovskis continued: “We see opportunities in innovations with the specific geometry of tethered caps, for example. The fact that we work so closely with our brand customers means that we can discuss potential issues and create tweaked solutions that address comfort, hygiene, and intuitive opening as much as meeting the EU legislation for sustainability.”

Even though the EU Directive is a clear rule for all beverage brands, there is no ‘one size fits all’ solution for the tethered caps themselves. While similarities will no doubt be evident, those ‘tiny details’ bring interesting opportunities for innovation, bringing brand-specific, consumer-relevant advantages that don’t cost the earth.

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