

Balloons and Biodegradability

Qualatex latex balloons are made from Natural Rubber Latex (NRL), which is an organic material—not plastic—and we source our raw latex from sustainably managed farms. NRL is a natural polymer and is biodegradable. We understand the definition of biodegradability for many people has been evolving over time and there are extreme differences of opinions (i.e., is it time based, standards based, etc.). When we began using the term many years ago, we based our assertion simply on the dictionary definition of the word biodegradable: “capable of decaying through the action of living organisms: biodegradable paper; biodegradable detergent” (definition here from dictionary.com, but similar to the definition in most dictionaries). Our product clearly meets that definition.

We are members of ASTM International and International Organization for Standardization (ISO), and neither of these standards-setting organizations has an approved test for latex biodegradability. ASTM formed a new Subcommittee in late 2021, D11.27, on sustainability. We are encouraging the ASTM group to move forward and develop one or more scientifically valid tests because biodegradation occurs differently in different environments.

Biodegradable: capable of decaying through the action of living organisms.

Natural Rubber Latex is biodegradable.

There are not currently any approved tests for latex biodegradability backed by standards-setting organizations. Pioneer is urging ASTM to develop scientifically valid tests for latex balloon biodegradation in various environments.