

Asbestos in imported paddlewheel aerators for aquaculture

Purpose

This safety alert provides information about the presence of asbestos in gaskets that are components of paddlewheel aerators, manufactured in China and India.



Figure 1: A paddlewheel aerator in use. Arrow indicates motor and gear reducer, under housing.



Figure 2: Motor and gear reducer.



Figure 3: Arrow indicates flange/gasket position.

Background

Paddlewheel aerators are used by land-based aquaculture industries as a means of oxygenating the water in which the livestock grow. During routine maintenance, an Australian end-user of a Chinese manufactured paddlewheel aerator identified the presence of asbestos within a gasket, common to a number of the machines. Following this occurrence, another importer of an identical Indian manufactured aerator also identified the presence of asbestos in the same (positioned) gasket component, although of different origin. The importers of both model aerators have initiated contact and lawful remediation of the affected gaskets in all machines supplied to Australian customers.

Product description

The affected (flat) gaskets are positioned in the flange between the main electric motor and the gear reducer (figures 2 and 3). The gaskets are not manufactured by the same organisations that manufacture the aerators, but are supplied by third party manufacturers, which are yet to be identified in either matter.



Figures 4 and 5: Chinese origin gasket with asbestos showing manufacturer markings.

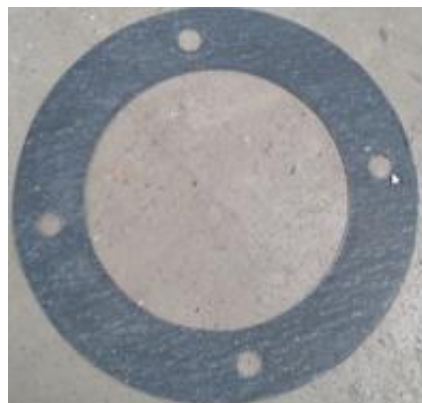


Figure 6: Indian origin gasket with asbestos.

Asbestos in imported products

In Australia, the importation, manufacture, supply, sale and use or reuse of asbestos and asbestos-containing products is not permitted, except under very limited circumstances. However, some countries around the world continue to manufacture and supply asbestos and asbestos-containing products and materials. In addition, some supplier countries may classify goods with low levels of asbestos as 'asbestos-free' or 'non-asbestos'. Sourcing apparent non-asbestos products from manufacturers that also make asbestos products is a risk for importers because under Australian law any level of asbestos is prohibited for import or use.

Risk control

Until known otherwise, operators of paddlewheel aerators made in China or India, or with any components made in these countries, should assume the machines include gaskets containing asbestos. Maintenance personnel in possession of gaskets with identical markings to those depicted above, or the identified machines, are advised not to undertake any activities that may disturb the structure of the gasket. They should contact the Australian supplier for clarification and seek the guidance of an asbestos professional.

Action Required

- Importers must ensure they do not import asbestos into Australia. They need to be aware of the varying definitions and standards applied in the country of origin and/or supply and ensure they receive adequate evidence of non-asbestos materials used by the manufacturer. A declaration of no asbestos from the overseas supplier, on its own, is not acceptable evidence.
- When a risk is identified at the border, the ABF will require assurance from the importer, in the form of documentary evidence, that the goods do not contain asbestos. A test report from a NATA accredited laboratory (or equivalent international laboratory) showing no detectable asbestos is the best form of assurance. If adequate assurance is not provided, importers will face delays and be responsible for costs incurred when the goods are held at the border for the purposes of sampling and testing. See the [ABF website](#) for further information.
- If a consumer wishes to dispose of equipment they believe may contain asbestos, they should take it to a licensed facility that handles hazardous waste. Further information on the disposal of asbestos waste may be obtained from local government authorities, the relevant environmental protection authority or waste disposal authority in your state or territory.
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Where do I get advice?

If unsure what to do, contact your State/Territory/Commonwealth WHS regulator:

Jurisdiction	Regulator	Contact Details	Website
ACT	WorkSafe ACT	13 22 81	www.worksafe.act.gov.au
Commonwealth	Comcare	1300 366 979	www.comcare.gov.au
NSW	SafeWork NSW	13 10 50	www.safework.nsw.gov.au
NSW	NSW Gov Asbestos page	13 10 50	www.asbestos.nsw.gov.au
Qld	Workplace Health and Safety Qld	1300 362 128	www.worksafe.qld.gov.au
Qld	Qld Gov Asbestos page	13 74 68	www.asbestos.qld.gov.au
NT	NT WorkSafe	1800 019 115	www.worksafe.nt.gov.au
NT	NT Gov Asbestos page	1800 019 115	www.asbestos.nt.gov.au
NZ	WorkSafe NZ	+64 0800 030 040	www.worksafe.govt.nz
SA	SafeWork SA	1300 365 255	www.safework.sa.gov.au
SA	SA Gov Asbestos page	1300 365 255	www.asbestos.sa.gov.au
TAS	WorkSafe TAS	1300 366 322	www.worksafe.tas.gov.au
Vic	WorkSafe VIC	1800 136 089	www.worksafe.vic.gov.au
Vic	Vic Gov Asbestos page	1800 136 089	www.asbestos.vic.gov.au
WA	WorkSafe WA	1300 307 877	www.worksafe.wa.gov.au
ACT	WorkSafe ACT	13 22 81	www.worksafe.act.gov.au

This Alert has been developed by the Heads of Workplace Safety Authorities (HWSA) Imported Materials with Asbestos Working Group, whose membership comprises representatives from: Australian Border Force, Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency, Attorney General's Department, Australian Competition & Consumer Commission, New Zealand Customs Service, Comcare, Safe Work Australia, SafeWork NSW, SafeWork SA, NT WorkSafe, Workplace Health and Safety Queensland, WorkSafe ACT, WorkSafe Tasmania, WorkSafe Victoria and WorkSafe WA, WorkSafe NZ.