

## Asbestos in insulation component of battery-operated bee smokers - April 2019

The Heads of Workplace Safety Authorities has issued this national safety alert regarding asbestos found in the insulation component of electric/battery-operated bee smokers that have been imported into Australia.

### Purpose

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This safety alert provides information about electric/battery-operated bee smokers which contain asbestos in the insulating board between the battery compartment in the handle of the device and the metal smoker. Two models with different coloured handles have been found to have asbestos in the insulating board. See Figures 1, 2 and 3.



**Figure 1:** Electric/battery-operated bee smoker Model 1 (ref: Workplace Health and Safety Queensland)



**Figure 2:** Close-up of asbestos containing insulation board. (ref: Workplace Health and Safety Queensland)



**Figure 3:** Electric/battery-operated bee smoker Model 2 (ref: Workplace Health and Safety Queensland).

## Background

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The devices were imported from China by three separate beekeeping equipment retailer businesses based in Queensland. Tests have confirmed asbestos was present in the insulating board between the battery compartment in the handle of the device and the metal smoker of the two models shown above.

## Work health and safety laws

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Work health and safety (or Occupational Health and Safety) laws place duties on persons conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU) or the employer to manage the risk of asbestos containing material (ACM). The work health and safety laws also place duties on importers and suppliers to ensure that imported products, plant, structures or substances do not contain asbestos.

## Risk

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These electric/battery-operated bee smokers should not pose an immediate hazard or measurable health risk through normal use, as the asbestos is firmly bonded to the matrix of the insulating board. However, the insulating board could be damaged and release asbestos fibres.

## Recommended actions

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Under state and territory work health and safety laws, a PCBU (or employer) must not use or allow a bee smoker to be used if it contains asbestos.

1. *Stop using your electric/battery-operated bee smokers and find out if they contain asbestos*

Anyone with one of these bee smokers should immediately stop using it, wrap it in sturdy plastic or put it in a sturdy plastic bag, seal it with tape and store it away until you can confirm with your supplier that there is no asbestos-containing material in them. The supplier should be able to provide accredited analysis/ testing information that confirms no asbestos content in the mats (for information on 'asbestos-free' vs no asbestos content, see [ASEA's website](#)). If not, users should assume the electric/battery-operated bee smoker contain asbestos and either have them tested, or dispose of them as outlined below. (Further information on testing can be found on [ASEA's website](#).)

2. *Dispose of electric/battery-operated bee smokers that contain asbestos*

Electric/battery-operated bee smokers used in workplaces confirmed to contain asbestos must be disposed of as asbestos waste. If you are in any doubt about whether the bee smokers contain asbestos, dispose of them as if they do contain asbestos. For members of the public using the electric/battery-operated bee smokers confirmed to contain asbestos, these units should be disposed of at any appropriate facility. Your local council or EPA landfill facility will be able to provide you with information on the location of hazardous waste facilities. To find a disposal site near you that accepts asbestos waste, see [ASEA's website](#).

### 3. *Check when you buy new bee smokers*

If you are buying or importing bee smokers, ask your supplier for documentation confirming there is no asbestos in the products (even though they may be labelled as 'asbestos-free'). Users who have purchased bee smokers can reasonably expect the supplier to provide evidence that the bee smokers do not contain asbestos. Local standards in some countries of origin may classify goods 'asbestos-free' where they meet a certain low level of asbestos content. In Australia, a product found with any level of asbestos is prohibited for import or use.

Importers should become familiar with the information on the [Australian Border Force website asbestos information page](#).

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

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.