

Information Sheet

Asbestos in Coloured Sand

Purpose

This information sheet provides guidance about the presence of asbestos identified in some imported decorative and coloured sand products used mainly in therapeutic and children's play and craft activities.

Background

Several voluntary recalls have occurred in Australia and New Zealand by suppliers after testing identified the presence of asbestos in some imported brands of coloured sand products manufactured in China.

Asbestos minerals can sometimes geologically occur with other minerals. When the primary mineral is quarried or mined, the asbestos may be inadvertently collected along with that mineral material.

Accredited laboratory testing of a variety of coloured sand products has revealed both positive and negative results for the presence of asbestos. The variability of testing results from similar products suggests that where asbestos is present in the products the concentrations of asbestos may be low. These types of imported products will continue to receive government regulator attention for the risk of asbestos content.

The Australian and New Zealand Governments as well as State and Territory Governments are taking a precautionary approach to this incident, ensuring handling and disposal messaging is clearly understood in each jurisdiction.

As testing continues, suppliers may voluntarily recall more decorative and coloured sand products. It's important to check the **Product Safety websites** for the Australian Competition & Consumer Commission (ACCC) and the New Zealand Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) – see links in table below.

Product description

A range of coloured sands marketed and sold for their sensory value and variance of bright colouring, for play, craft activities and decorative use. Packaging size can vary across branded products. The products are sold in single colour and multi-colour sets.

At-risk product descriptions include, but are not limited to:

- Coloured Sand
- Magic Sand
- Kinetic Sand
- Sensory Sand
- Rainbow Sand
- Craft Sand
- Sand Art packs
- Decorative Sand
- Cotton Sand
- Wedding Sand
- Scented Sand

Examples recalled in Australia and New Zealand

Not all recalled products or colours shown



Figure 1: Pack of 6 x 10g tubes



Figure 2: 380g jars of coloured sand



Figure 3: 1.3kg tubs



Figure 4: 1kg tubs



Figure 5: Tubs of mixed colours 4 x 200g with moulding toys



Figure 6: Sand Art sets

Action required

Places of work

- Stop using the product.
- Refer to the requirements **published by your jurisdictional work/occupational health and safety regulator** using the links below, as strict laws apply to the control of products which contain asbestos.
- Duty holders, including employers and persons conducting a business or undertaking (PCBUs) must ensure so far as reasonably practicable, that workers and others at the workplace (for example customers) are not exposed to potential risks associated with the coloured sand products identified.
- PCBUs also have a duty to consult workers about work health and safety and to consult, cooperate and coordinate with other duty holders.

Consumers

- Stop using the product.
- If the sand is still in its packaging, place in a heavy-duty plastic bag seal and then into a second bag, double tape it securely, label it clearly and store in a secure location.
- Customers are urged not to dispose of the product in the general waste unless authorised to do so lawfully in your jurisdiction. Information on the disposal of asbestos waste, including disposal facilities in your state or territory can be found on the [Asbestos and Silica Safety and Eradication Agency website](#).
- Keep children and other people away from areas where the sand has been used until the area has been cleaned.
- Clean up sites where the product was used using wet cloths to avoid generating dust. Wear gloves and a mask (preferably P2). Double bag the sand, gloves, mask and cloths, tape it securely, label it clearly and store in a secure location until it can be disposed of.
- If you are uncertain or need further advice on how to manage and dispose of the sand product, please contact a licensed asbestos professional.
- For product recall information: refer to the ACCC Product Safety website in Australia and the MBIE Product Safety website in New Zealand. Refer to links below.

Asbestos in imported products

While asbestos has been prohibited in Australia since December 2003 and in New Zealand since October 2016, some countries still allow use in manufacturing. Certification of goods as 'asbestos-free' from some overseas manufacturers might not meet Australian and New Zealand requirements. Some supplier countries may also classify goods with low levels of asbestos as 'asbestos-free'. In Australia and New Zealand, any level of asbestos is prohibited for import or use.

Australia

- Importers must ensure they do not import asbestos into Australia. They should be aware of the varying definitions and standards applied in the country of origin and/or supply. Australian regulations apply at the border.
- When a risk good is identified at the border, the Australian Border Force (ABF) will require assurance 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 purpose of sampling and testing. More information is on the [ABF website](#).

New Zealand

- Importers must ensure they do not import asbestos containing products into New Zealand without a valid permit.
- The New Zealand Customs Service (NZ Customs) enforces the Imports and Exports (Asbestos-containing Products) Prohibition Order 2016 at the border.
- The role of NZ Customs is to ensure that asbestos containing products (when declared) are covered by a permit to import or export issued by the Environmental Protection Authority. If asbestos containing products are imported into New Zealand without a permit or without a permit being granted subsequently, these products are forfeit and can be seized, at any time after their forfeiture, by Customs under section 178 of the Customs and Excise Act 2018.

Where do I get further advice?

The Environmental Health Standing Committee (enHealth). **EnHealth does not recommend any clinical assessment** for those who may have been in contact with these products. Refer to the [enHealth website](#) for health advice.

If unsure what to do with a coloured sand product, contact the relevant WHS regulator in your jurisdiction:

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 website	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 website	13 74 68	www.asbestos.qld.gov.au
NT	NT WorkSafe	1800 019 115	https://worksafe.nt.gov.au
NT	NT Gov Asbestos website	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 website	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 website	1800 136 089	www.asbestos.vic.gov.au
WA	WorkSafe WA	1300 307 877	www.worksafe.wa.gov.au

Other relevant agencies:

Jurisdiction	Regulator	Specific Website	Website
Commonwealth Australia	Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC)	www.productsafety.gov.au	www.accc.gov.au
Commonwealth Australia	Australian Border Force	www.abf.gov.au/asbestos	www.abf.gov.au
New Zealand	Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE)	www.productsafety.govt.nz	www.mbie.govt.nz

This information sheet has been developed by the Heads of Workplace Safety Authorities (HWSA) Imported Materials with Asbestos Working Group (IMAWG), whose membership comprises representatives from: SafeWork NSW, SafeWork SA, NT WorkSafe, Workplace Health and Safety Queensland, WorkSafe ACT, WorkSafe Tasmania, WorkSafe Victoria, WorkSafe WA, WorkSafe New Zealand, Australian Border Force, Australian Competition & Consumer Commission, Asbestos and Silica Safety and Eradication Agency and observers: Australian Government Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, Comcare and Safe Work Australia.