

Asbestos in imported Bee Smokers

Purpose

This safety alert provides information about asbestos in components of imported Bee Smokers (also known as smokepots). The risk is not limited to a single manufacturer or brand.

Background

Two types of bee smokers are advertised to the Australian market: battery-powered electric and manual smokers. The manual model requires manual force by squeezing a bellows. The electric model has a small motor and fan contained within an attached handle.



Figure 1: Manual bee smoker – bellows indicated



Figure 2: Battery-powered electric bee smoker

The Heads of Workplace Safety Authorities previously issued a national safety alert for asbestos detected in the insulation component of imported battery-powered electric bee smokers. Chrysotile asbestos has also been detected in the bellows of some manual bee smokers at the border, imported from China.

Product description

Affected parts: Manual bee smokers. The bellows of some may be constructed with a woven cloth-like material which includes a high concentration of asbestos.



Figure 3: Bellows material cut for analysis



Figure 4: Material with visible fibres

Note: Not all models of manual smokers contain asbestos in the bellows. Some are constructed with leather, plastic or other material. Buyers, however, should exercise caution and check with the retailer or supplier as to exactly what the material is.

Affected parts: Electric bee smokers. An insulation board situated between the handle and the canister, made with bonded asbestos.



Figure 5: Insulation board indicated

Various makes and models, all of a similar nature, are advertised in online shopping websites by sellers based outside Australia and are cheaply obtained. Consumers and commercial importers are advised to avoid suppliers of these products.



Figure 6: Images of similar products from online shopping sites, all with identical suspect components

Identical models to these may also be available from countries with asbestos bans in place. The smokers, however, may have been constructed from components imported to those countries. The country the goods are imported from may not necessarily be the origin for all components. If the bellows material looks the same, it probably is.

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-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

Consult an asbestos professional. Do not deconstruct the suspect component without professional advice. Damaging the structure of the components may release asbestos fibres into the air.

Action Required

- Importers must ensure they do not import asbestos into Australia. Varying definitions and standards may apply in the country of origin and/or supply. Importers should 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 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 about importing goods of risk for asbestos.
- If a consumer wishes to dispose of equipment they believe may contain asbestos, they should take it to a licensed facility that handles asbestos 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.

Where do I get advice?

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

Jurisdiction	Regulator	Contact Details	Website
Commonwealth	Comcare	1300 366 979	www.comcare.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/
ACT	WorkSafe ACT	02 6207 3000	www.worksafe.act.gov.au/
ACT	Asbestos – WorkSafe ACT	13 22 81	Asbestos - WorkSafe ACT
NSW	Safework NSW	13 10 50	www.safework.nsw.gov.au/
NSW	NSW Gov Asbestos page	13 10 50	www.asbestos.nsw.gov.au/
NT	Worksafe NT	1800 019 115	www.worksafe.nt.gov.au/
NT	NT Gov Asbestos page	1800 019 115	www.asbestos.nt.gov.au/
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.commerce.wa.gov.au/WorkSafe
NZ	WorkSafe NZ	+64 0800 030 040	www.worksafe.govt.nz

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.