

Prohibition (ban) on the use of chrysotile asbestos

A **national ban** on the importation, manufacture and use of all products containing chrysotile (white) asbestos will come into effect by 31 December 2003. Chrysotile is the main form of asbestos still used in Australia.

Prohibitions on the manufacture, supply, storage, transport, sale, use and re-use, installation and replacement of asbestos-containing material will be implemented in the Northern Territory. Similar regulations will be put in place in other Australian states and territories. At the same time, the Commonwealth will implement a ban on the import and export of asbestos and asbestos-containing materials.

What is chrysotile asbestos

Chrysotile asbestos is a naturally occurring fibrous silicate mineral that is a known carcinogen (causes cancer). Like other forms of asbestos, exposure to chrysotile can cause asbestosis, lung cancer and mesothelioma, in humans and animals. The objective of this prohibition is to reduce future death and illness.

Where is chrysotile asbestos found?

Asbestos was once a popular building material and was used, for example, in roofing materials, asbestos-cement (fibro) sheeting and pipes. Chrysotile, amosite and crocidolite were all used in the asbestos cement industry and for insulation and lagging. Over the years, these uses have been phased out and removal programs have been put in place, but considerable amounts of asbestos-containing material remains in some work environments.

Products that may contain asbestos include:

- Asbestos cement materials
- Corrugated sheets
- Flat sheeting panels
- Shingles or tiles (external or ceiling)
- Pipes, tubes or fittings
- Compressed asbestos sheeting (eg. millboard)
- Floor coverings (eg. vinyl asbestos tiles)
- Textured paints and coatings
- Asbestos bitumen products used to damp-proof
- Compressed asbestos fibre gaskets and seals
- Rubberised or polymerised asbestos gaskets and seals
- Asbestos tape / rope
- Lagging and jointing materials
- Heat resistant sealing and caulking compounds
- Mastics, sealants, putties and adhesives
- Electrical panel partitioning
- Electrical cloths and tapes
- Friction materials (eg. brake linings or blocks and clutch linings)
- Fire gloves, blankets and curtains

Asbestos free products

The decision to ban chrysotile asbestos has occurred through national consultation over the past two years. During this time, manufacturers, retailers and users of chrysotile products within Australia have been preparing for the ban, including developing and marketing new asbestos-free products and materials. A number of substitutes for asbestos products are currently available to meet the increase in demand.

The ban will not apply to chrysotile products "*in situ*". Therefore, if you have chrysotile present in your business at the date the prohibition takes effect (31 December 2003) they can remain in place until they are required to be replaced or are disturbed. When they are replaced, it must be with non-chrysotile alternatives, the chrysotile products must be removed and disposed of in accordance with the current code of practice for the safe removal of asbestos [NOHSC 2002 (1988)].

Stockpiles of asbestos products will require disposal.

International prohibition

The European Union will ban all uses of asbestos (including the importation and export of products containing asbestos) from 1 January 2005.

Legislative requirements

Current restrictions exist for asbestos under the *Work Health (Occupational Health and Safety) Regulations*.

NOHSC has declared amendments to the *National Model Regulations for the Control of Workplace Hazardous Substances* that ban the manufacture and use of products containing chrysotile asbestos throughout Australia. The Workplace Relations Ministers' Council has endorsed the nationwide ban.

In August 2003 the National Occupational Health and Safety Commission (NOHSC) reduced the National Exposure Standard for Chrysotile Asbestos from 1 f/mL to 0.1 f/mL for an 8 hour time weighted average exposure. This reduced limit is consistent with the national exposure standard for all other forms of asbestos, including mixtures of any form of asbestos or where composition is unknown.

Further information

Additional information on this issue or other safety matters is available at NT WorkSafe:

GPO Box 4821 Darwin NT 0801

Telephone: 1800 019 115 ♦ Facsimile: (08) 8999 5141 ♦ Email: ntworksafe.deet@nt.gov.au

Website: worksafe.nt.gov.au

Further information about chrysotile and its prohibition can be found at the NOHSC website:

www.nohsc.gov.au

putting safety first >

