

Environmental and Occupational Health & Safety Unit

OHS ALERT

ASBESTOS IN IMPORTED CEMENT SHEET

BACKGROUND

Asbestos has been identified in imported cement sheet that is marked as “asbestos-free”.

Concrete fibre sheeting imported from China and thought to be “asbestos free”, has been found to contain chrysotile (white) asbestos.

Adelaide contractor RJE used the material, which was imported from China, in the flooring of two electrical substations in South Australia.

State workplace safety authorities are monitoring 17 sites in New South Wales, 13 in Queensland, 11 in South Australia and eight in Victoria.

The Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency

The use of asbestos-containing material for construction (including residential buildings) is prohibited and is a criminal offence in Victoria.



Asbestos containing imported fibre sheets

The asbestos-free certification provided by overseas manufacturers can be wrong.

There are thought to be 64 sites where asbestos-tainted concrete fibre sheeting has been used in construction.

believes it is a growing problem as more products are brought into Australia, because of the wind-down in Australian manufacturing.

THE PROBLEM

Although it is illegal to manufacture asbestos-containing material in Victoria, asbestos is still used in manufactured products in some countries. Manufacturers in these countries may classify their

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goods as “asbestos free” even though they contain a low level of asbestos content. Nevertheless, it is illegal to, for example, supply, store, transport, sell and use goods containing asbestos in Victoria.

CONTROL MEASURES

Victorian importers of goods from countries which still manufacture asbestos-containing goods should be aware of the varying definitions and standards applied to manufactured products in the country of origin and/or supply.

“arrange for an Australian independent test of the product by a NATA accredited laboratory as listed on the NATA website”

To ensure you do not import asbestos-containing goods into Victoria, you should:

1. obtain certification from the overseas manufacturer or supplier that the goods are “asbestos free” (and do not contain low amounts of asbestos content)

2. obtain product testing results from the overseas manufacturer or supplier that the product/material does not contain asbestos (the testing should be undertaken by an accredited laboratory equivalent to NATA)

3. arrange for an Australian independent test of the product by a NATA

accredited laboratory as listed on the NATA website at nata.com.au

FURTHER INFORMATION

The Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency has information for businesses importing materials about what to do to ensure imported products do not contain asbestos. Go to asbestosafety.gov.au/managing-importation-asbestos-australia

The Department of Immigration and Border Protection has important information on prohibited imports, including all forms of asbestos. Go to border.gov.au/Busi/Impo/Proh

If you have any imported cement sheet on your site, even if it claims not to contain asbestos, get it independently tested, in Australia, before you use and install it.

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