

Chrysotile Asbestos

Chrysotile is a type of asbestos used in vehicle brake pads, linings and blocks, clutch plates and in gaskets. Chrysotile is also found in insulation, cement materials, vinyl floor tiles, piping and sealants, although it is no longer used for these products.

NICNAS assessed chrysotile in February 1999. These are the main findings from that assessment. The assessment recommended that all use of chrysotile be phased out.

A product containing more than 0.1% chrysotile is classed as a Hazardous Substance.

Chrysotile is in class 9 under the Australian Dangerous Goods Code. There are restrictions specifically for the storage and transport of chrysotile under this Code.

The main risk from chrysotile is from breathing it in.

Breathing in chrysotile dust causes lung cancer, mesothelioma and asbestosis.

There may be no immediate signs of ill health from breathing in fibres of chrysotile. However, the damage caused to the lung can be fatal many years later.

Smoking combined with asbestos exposure increases the risk of lung cancer.

RECOMMENDATIONS

There may be no safe exposure level for chrysotile, so all exposure should be avoided.

- The use and importation of chrysotile should be phased out.
- If a safer product or process can be substituted for one involving chrysotile, this should be done. More information on substitution is available in the full public report available from NICNAS.
- Exhaust ventilation should always be used to avoid exposure.
- Specific procedures exist for handling of spills and disposal. Refer to Material Safety Data Sheet.
- Workers using chrysotile should be trained how to use it safely and should undergo regular medical check ups.
- Home mechanics replacing brake parts may also be exposed to chrysotile.

The national exposure standard for chrysotile is one fibre per mL of air. This standard is currently being revised.

More information on chrysotile can be found in the Material Safety Data Sheet available from the supplier. The most comprehensive source of information is the detailed assessment of chrysotile published by the National Industrial Chemical Notification and Assessments Scheme (NICNAS). This is available free of charge by calling 1800 638 528. More information on the use of industrial chemicals can be found at the NICNAS web site: www.nicnas.gov.au