



DEPARTMENT OF IMMIGRATION AND BORDER PROTECTION NOTICE

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Building products at risk of containing asbestos

The Department of Immigration and Border Protection assesses all goods imported into Australia against a number of risks, including asbestos. Goods at risk of containing asbestos are targeted by the Australian Border Force (ABF) for compliance and enforcement action.

To ensure the ongoing safety of Australian consumers and construction industry members, the Department of Immigration and Border Protection is actively targeting imported building products at high risk of containing asbestos.

The Department urges industry members to ensure they are aware of the import restrictions and border requirements for products that may contain asbestos.

An Australia wide ban on the importation, manufacture and use of all types of asbestos and products containing asbestos took effect on 31 December 2003. Import restrictions complement state and territory work health and safety laws that prohibit the supply, transport, use, or handling of asbestos unless an exception applies.

Despite the restrictions, asbestos has been detected in a diverse range of imported building products, including Expanded Polystyrene Sandwich (EPS) panels and similar products of fibre/cement compound board, bitumen products used for damp-proofing, heat resistant sealing and caulking compounds, heating equipment, lagging, switchgear with washers, electrical panel partitioning, electrical cloths and tape.

Imported building products at risk of containing asbestos

Asbestos is a naturally occurring mineral fibre, still widely used in some countries due to its flexibility, tensile strength, insulation quality, chemical inertness and affordability. In a number of countries, unlike Australia, there are few to no restrictions in the use and supply of asbestos. Local standards in some countries may even classify goods as 'asbestos-free' where they meet a certain low level of asbestos content. In Australia, a product found with any level of asbestos is prohibited for import or use. Importers should be aware of the varying definitions and standards applied in the country of origin and/or supply. Many products containing asbestos can be freely ordered on the internet and will often claim to be asbestos-free.

As a consequence, asbestos can be unintentionally and unknowingly imported into Australia.

What can be done to ensure imported building products do not contain asbestos?

The onus is on importers to ensure they do not bring prohibited imports such as asbestos into Australia. All goods imported into Australia are risk assessed and if there is a suspicion that goods arriving at the border might contain asbestos, the goods are detained and documentation will be requested.

The importer may be required to arrange for testing and certification to ensure that there is no presence of asbestos.

In some cases, certification provided to importers from overseas manufacturers that goods are asbestos-free has been proven incorrect or unreliable for the purposes of Australian Regulations.

The presence of asbestos in goods can only be confirmed by licensed competent persons¹ taking and sending samples to accredited laboratories for testing. The arrangement and cost of any independent inspection, testing and storage of goods at risk of containing asbestos is the responsibility of the importer.

Guidance in regard to testing, certification and further information is available on the Department's website at border.gov.au/Busi/Impo/Proh/Asbestos

[signed]

Erin Dale

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Australian Border Force

CANBERRA ACT

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¹ Section 5 of the Commonwealth *Work Health and Safety Regulations 2011* defines a **competent person**, in relation to asbestos. A NATA accredited laboratory can arrange a qualified competent person for asbestos sample collection.