

ASBESTOS IN CHILDREN'S PRODUCTS INCREASES CALLS FOR LEGISLATION IN THE USA

Report calls for asbestos regulation in consumer goods after its fibres were found in crayons and toy crime lab kits in the USA. Learn about the issues, regulations and solutions relating to asbestos in children's products.

The issue of asbestos in children's products has come to the forefront in recent weeks following the release of a report from the Environmental Working Group (EWG) Action Fund announcing the presence of this carcinogenic chemical in a number of crayons and toy crime lab kits bought from retail chains in the United States, or through online retailers.

Samples tested by a government-certified laboratory and found to contain asbestos were subsequently verified by a second government-certified laboratory. These findings come 15 years after the US Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) was alerted to the presence of asbestos in crayons, and

some 8 years after asbestos was found in the fingerprint powder of a crime scene kit. In response to the findings in 2000, the CPSC conducted its own tests but did not enact legislation.

According to the EWG report, the crayons and toy crime lab kits that contained asbestos were manufactured in China before importation to the US. It was unclear whether the US companies were responsible for manufacturing the products, or whether the use of their trademarks was licensed. The asbestos found in the tested products was most likely a contaminant in talc, used as a binding agent in the crayons and the powders in the crime scene fingerprint kits.

The EWG report calls for US federal agencies to set rules for asbestos in consumer products:

- The CPSC – to ban talc in children's products, including crayons, chalk and fingerprint kits. These measures should be modelled on rules for lead in children's products where toys are to be tested and certified to demonstrate compliance
- The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) – to set clear limits on the use of asbestos in cosmetics, pharmaceuticals, food and other products that contain talc



REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS AND LEGISLATIVE PROPOSALS

EUROPEAN UNION

- Annex XVII, REACH – asbestos is prohibited
- European Toy Safety Directive 2009/48/EC (TSD) – asbestos is a carcinogenic, category 1A substance under Regulation 1272/2008 on the Classification, Labelling and Packaging of Substances and Mixtures (CLP Regulation) and is prohibited in toys

US FEDERAL: CONGRESS

In March 2015, Senate Bill S.700 (companion bill H.R. 2030) 'Reducing Exposure to Asbestos Database Act of 2015' (READ ACT) was introduced to amend the Asbestos Information Act of 1988. The bill would establish a public database for products containing asbestos and to require public disclosure of these products.

US STATE: CONNECTICUT

Known as the 'State Child Protection Act', the law prohibits asbestos in toys or other articles for children under the age of 16.

US STATE: CALIFORNIA

Proposition 65, better known as Prop 65, is the 'Safe Drinking Water and Toxic Enforcement Act of 1986'. Since February 1988, businesses have been required to provide a clear and reasonable warning before knowingly and intentionally exposing anyone to asbestos. Since this enforcement, there have been documented settlements for asbestos in crayons.

METHODS FOR ANALYZING ASBESTOS

The following methods quantify the amount of asbestos in an item:

- ISO 22262-1 or NYS ELAP 198.6: uses the polarised light microscopy (PLM) and dispersion staining techniques
- NIOSH 9000: uses the X-ray powder diffraction technique
- NYS ELAP 198.4/Chatfield: performed by Transmission Electron Microscopy (TEM) utilising selective area electron diffraction (SAED) and energy dispersive x-ray analysis (EDXA)

SGS TESTING SOLUTIONS

SGS has a full range of services to assist you, whether you need to check products against legislative standards, retailer requests, or for your own peace of mind and brand protection.

Our asbestos testing solutions can be customised to suit your needs and budget. We will help you to understand the options that best meet your requirements, and provide a range of services to ensure your products are safe for your chosen markets.

For more information on asbestos solutions contact your local SGS representative or email our global team consumer.products@sgs.com.

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ASBESTOS: PROPERTIES AND HAZARDS

Asbestos is a group of six naturally occurring mineral fibres and is often found in mines alongside talc deposits. Classified as a known human carcinogen by the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), its individual fibres are invisible to the naked eye.

When materials containing asbestos are damaged or disturbed, fibres are released into the atmosphere. When asbestos fibres are inhaled, they can accumulate and may become trapped in lungs. If swallowed, they can become embedded in the digestive system.

Over time, ingested asbestos fibres can cause lung and other forms of cancer.