

Safety Alert

Importation of products potentially containing asbestos

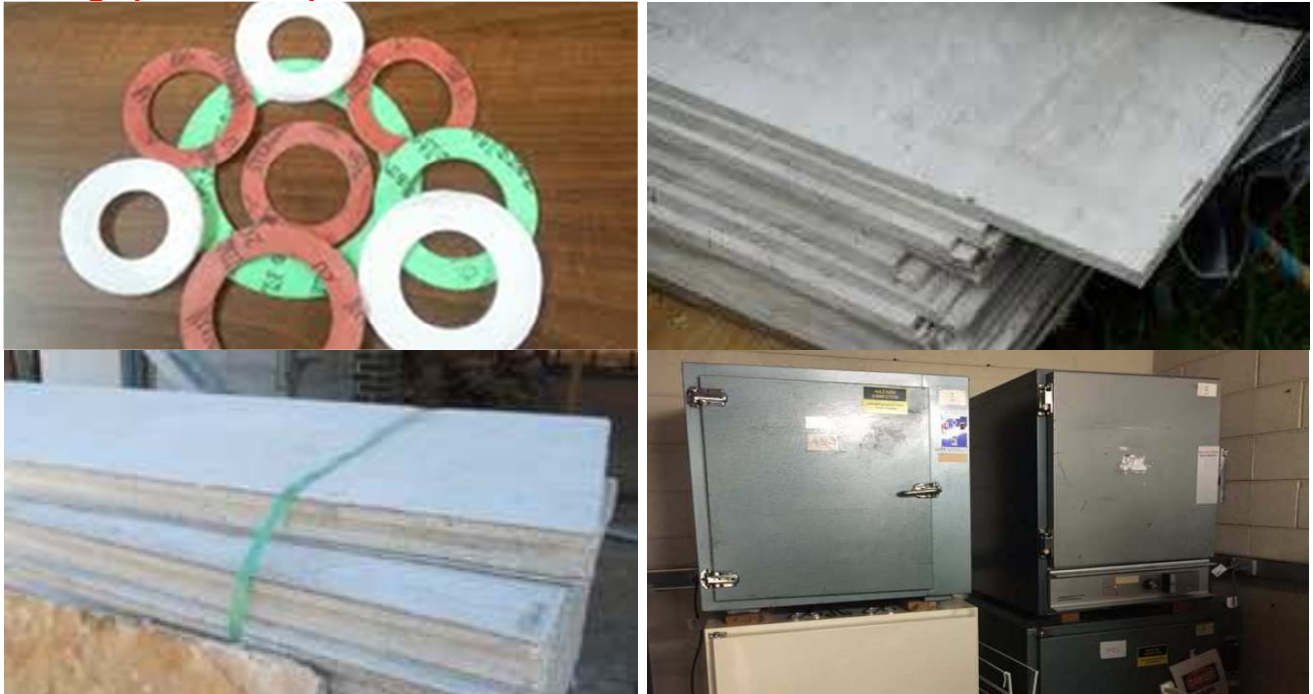
Purpose

RMIT wish to notify stakeholders that in recent months, there have been several reported cases of building materials, plant or equipment being imported to Australia from overseas manufacturers that have been found to contain asbestos.

Key Messages:

1. Contractors, importers and RMIT requestors of materials, plant and equipment manufactured overseas should be aware of the potential risks with regard to asbestos.
2. RMIT requires all Contractors, importers and suppliers to comply with relevant National and State Legislation, including those highlighted in this document covering the procurement and importation of building materials, plant and equipment.
3. RMIT reserves the right to request information on how imported materials and equipment are assessed and where necessary NATA (or equivalent) accredited certification to verify.
4. If any doubt as to the likely asbestos content of an item and materials exists, it should be inspected and tested at the expense of the Contractor by a competent person e.g. Asbestos Consultant or Occupational Hygienist **prior** to its arrival on an RMIT site.

Photographs of Example Materials and Products



This alert is to be circulated to all Contractors and or Schools who may procure products, plant or equipment from overseas for use/installation on RMIT sites

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Importation of products potentially containing asbestos

Hazard

- Although illegal in Australia, asbestos is still widely used in many overseas countries for its flexibility, tensile strength, insulation properties and affordability
- Local standards in some countries may classify a material as “asbestos free” when it meets a certain low level content of asbestos
- In Australia, products containing **any** level of asbestos is prohibited for import or use
- Solely relying on certification from overseas manufactures or suppliers may lead to the unintentional importation of asbestos containing materials

Extent of the Problem

Cases of unintentional importation of asbestos have recently been reported on mining and construction sites across Australia, including Sydney and Melbourne.

Examples of overseas materials at risk of containing asbestos are:

- Heating equipment
- Lagging
- Gaskets
- Jointing mastic
- Flues and furnaces
- Brake pads & friction materials
- Caulking compounds
- Fibre/cement compound boards
- Bitumen products
- Electrical panel partitioning
- Electrical cloth and tape
- Switchgear with washers
- Façade panels including expanded polystyrene (EPS) panels

Legal Responsibilities:

- Importation of asbestos or goods containing asbestos is prohibited to Australia, under Regulation 4C of the *Customs (Prohibited Imports) Regulations 1956*
- The supply, storage, transport, sale, use and installation of asbestos is prohibited under Division 4 of Victorian *Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 2007*
- Persons or entities found to have imported asbestos containing goods to Australia without a suitable permit may be prosecuted

Additional Support and Information

- The following government agencies provide advice on asbestos and assistance in preventing it's unintentional importation:
 - WorkSafe Victoria
 - Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency
 - Department of Immigration and Border Protection
- <http://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/forms-and-publications/forms-and-publications/asbestos-in-imported-building-products>
- <https://www.border.gov.au/Customsnotices/Documents/ACN-2015-38.pdf>
- https://www.asbestossafety.gov.au/sites/asbestos/files/HWSA_fact_sheet_%20Importation_asbestos_goods_October2015.pdf
- <https://www.border.gov.au/Importingandbuyinggoodsfromoverseas/Documents/acn2010-45.pdf>

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