

ASBESTOS IN SOME BUNSEN BURNER MATS

This Safety Alert has been issued due to the potential presence of asbestos in Bunsen burner gauze mats that have been imported into Australia. A more detailed Safety Alert on this matter is available at the Asbestos Safety and Eradication website. Go to www.asbestossafety.gov.au, search for 'bunsen burner safety alert' to find the full alert.

Background

WorkSafe Tasmania has become aware that asbestos-containing material may be present in Bunsen burner gauze mats, commonly used in laboratories, that have been imported into Australia. These mats typically have a ceramic disk in the centre. Gauze mats without this ceramic centre have no risk of containing asbestos.



Image: Example of a gauze laboratory mat.

Work health and safety laws prohibit a range of activities around asbestos, including its importation, supply, sale and use. The laws also set out duties to identify all asbestos present in a workplace.

Risk from using asbestos-contaminated gauze mats

Even if a gauze mat contains asbestos, the risk from normal use will generally be extremely low. Free fibre release into the air will be minimal. Over time, particles and debris may break off during use or through abrasion or impact in storage. These do not represent an airborne risk.

Recommended actions

Stop using your mats and find out if they contain asbestos

Quarantine any gauze mats until you can confirm with your supplier that there is no asbestos-containing material in them, even if they are labelled asbestos free. If you can't confirm this with your supplier, you could have them tested at a National Association of Testing Authorities (NATA) accredited laboratory. For information on testing, go to www.asbestossafety.gov.au and look under the Identification and testing tab.

Quarantining the gauze mats while you're confirming if they contain asbestos could be as simple as putting them in a locked cabinet or container, labelled to indicate the potential for asbestos contamination.

Dispose of mats that contain asbestos

Gauze mats confirmed to contain asbestos must be disposed of as asbestos waste in accordance with the *Workplace Health and Safety Regulations 2012*.

If you are in any doubt about whether the gauze mats contain asbestos, dispose of them as if they do contain it.

For more information about correct disposal, go to www.worksafe.tas.gov.au and search for 'asbestos safety' or www.asbestossafety.gov.au and look under the Removal and disposal tab.

Check when you buy new gauze mats

If you are buying gauze mats, ask your supplier for documentation confirming there is no asbestos in the products, even if they are labelled asbestos free.

If you're unsure, get advice

If you are unsure about what to do, contact WorkSafe Tasmania on 1300 366 322 or go to www.worksafe.tas.gov.au

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