



Mines Safety Bulletin No. 80

Date: 7 September 2007

Subject: Asbestos – gaskets containing asbestos imported into Western Australia

Hazard

Asbestos gaskets were recently discovered on imported pipe-work at a construction site on a mine in Western Australia. The gaskets were used to protect the pipe-work during transit.

The asbestos gaskets were sent into Australia from overseas in contravention of the existing bans on the importation of asbestos materials. The asbestos was only identified by an employee who had worked on another site where the same hazard was discovered.

Contributory factors

- Some countries do not have the same bans on asbestos as Australia.
- A lot of construction material is being sourced overseas, in countries that still employ asbestos for a variety of uses.
- The contents of packaging material are not always specified by the purchaser and information on the packaging is commonly not provided by the supplier.
- People do not expect to come into contact with asbestos on new products, due to the asbestos ban.
- Asbestos is entering the country unannounced.

Recommendations

- All mine sites should have a stated 'no asbestos' policy.
- This policy should be referred to in all purchasing specifications, which should include the materials to be used in packaging.
- Sites should have a program or plan, consistent with the National Standard, for managing suspected asbestos-containing materials that may be discovered at the site.
- Any asbestos removal and disposal that may be undertaken should comply with relevant codes and regulations.

- Employees should be informed of any asbestos found at the site and advised of the measures put in place to protect their health.
- A register of any asbestos on site should be maintained and this should be amended to include any new or casual discoveries, such as that reported here.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Knee', is enclosed within a light grey rectangular box.

Martin J Knee
STATE MINING ENGINEER