

Official Information Act Request

Requester's details

Date: 15 March 2022

Name: [REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED]

Reference number: ENQ-43474-H4G7W6

Dear [REDACTED]

I refer to your request for information, which was received by the Ministry of Health on 7 February 2022 and transferred to the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) on 22 February 2022. You have asked for official information concerning health risks from talc-based products.

Anyone who imports or manufactures cosmetic products (which include talc-based products for personal use) must meet the conditions of the Cosmetic Products Group Standard (group standard), which includes a list of substances that cannot be included, as well as rules concerning quantities, labelling, packaging, and storage. The EPA does not individually assess products assigned to the group standard. However, importers and manufacturers self-assign their products to it and must keep records of how their products comply.

The group standard is largely based on the European Union (EU) Cosmetics Regulation (No 1223/2009).

Clause 5(a) of the group standard specifically disallows the inclusion of any substances that contain asbestos, which is also included in the list of prohibited substances and compounds in Schedule 4. Please see here for further information about the group standard:

<https://www.epa.govt.nz/industry-areas/hazardous-substances/guidance-for-importers-and-manufacturers/cosmetics/>

The group standard requires talc products used on infants (such as baby powder) to have a warning on the label to keep the powder away from children's noses and faces.

We are also currently working on amending the group standard to ensure it is better aligned with EU updates, and it is likely we will propose a ban on borates in talc (which are already banned from talc in the EU). The proposed amendment will be made publicly available and it will be open to public consultation. Please see here for further information about the public consultation process: <https://www.epa.govt.nz/public-consultations/>

I hope this information is helpful. You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of this decision. You can contact the Ombudsman on 0800 802 602, or by email at: info@ombudsman.parliament.nz

If you have any further queries, please do not hesitate to contact us via:
ministerials@epa.govt.nz

We may publish your request and our response on our website, www.epa.govt.nz. We make OIA responses available so others can read more about the work we do and the questions we are asked. Any information that might identify you would be removed to protect your privacy.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chris Hill', written in a cursive style.

Dr Christopher Hill
General Manager, Hazardous Substances and New Organisms