



United States  
Environmental Protection Agency

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Office of Chemical Safety and  
Pollution Prevention

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## **Nontechnical Summary of the Risk Evaluation for Asbestos Part 1: Chrysotile Asbestos**

*December 2020*

## **ACTION**

- EPA is releasing the final risk evaluation for Asbestos Part 1: Chrysotile Asbestos. The Agency evaluated six ongoing use categories of chrysotile asbestos (chlor-alkali diaphragms, sheet gaskets, other gaskets, oilfield brake blocks, aftermarket automotive brakes/linings, and other vehicle friction products) that are imported into the United States; EPA evaluated 32 conditions of use (COUs) within these occupation, including manufacture (includes import), processing, distribution, use and disposal. Of the 32 COUs evaluated, EPA determined that 16 COUs present unreasonable risk to human health (unchanged from the draft risk evaluation).
- Following the November 2019 decision of the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals in Safer Chemicals Healthy Families v. EPA, the Agency will also, in parallel to pursuing risk management under Part 1, evaluate legacy uses and associated disposals for asbestos (Part 2 of the Risk Evaluation). Legacy uses and associated disposals of asbestos are conditions of use for which manufacture (including import), processing and distribution in commerce no longer occur, but where use and disposal are still known, intended, or reasonably foreseen to occur. EPA will begin Part 2 of the Risk Evaluation for Asbestos with a draft scope document that will be made available for public comment mid-year 2021. This will be followed with a final scope document, a draft risk evaluation document for peer review and public comment, and then a final Part 2 risk evaluation for asbestos. Part 2 will consider legacy uses and associated disposals of chrysotile and the other five fiber types of asbestos described in the TSCA Title II definition.
- This final risk evaluation is conducted pursuant to TSCA, as amended by the Frank R. Lautenberg Chemical Safety for the 21st Century Act, which requires EPA to prioritize and evaluate the safety of existing chemicals to determine whether a chemical presents an unreasonable risk of injury to health or the environment under the conditions of use. If a chemical is determined to present an unreasonable risk, then EPA must regulate the substance to address the unreasonable risk.
- The final risk evaluation for asbestos Part 1 and supplemental materials can be found in docket EPA-HQ-OPPT-2019-0501 on [www.regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov).
- Asbestos was selected in 2016 as one of the first 10 chemicals for risk evaluation under section 6 of TSCA.
- Public comments and external scientific peer review informed the development of the final risk evaluation for Asbestos Part 1: Chrysotile Asbestos. EPA published the asbestos draft risk evaluation in April 2020, the problem formulation document in May 2018, and the scope document in June 2017.

## **KEY POINTS**

- After evaluating 32 COUs for chrysotile asbestos, EPA determined that 16 COUs present an unreasonable risk to human health (see attached break-out of COUs). This includes an

unreasonable risk of injury to health to workers and occupational non-users (ONUs) during occupational exposures, and to consumers and bystanders during exposures to consumer uses.

- Chrysotile asbestos COUs that EPA determined pose an unreasonable risk include processing and industrial/commercial use of diaphragms in the chlor-alkali industry, sheet gaskets used in chemical production, industrial/commercial use and disposal of brake blocks in oil industry, commercial and consumer use and disposal of aftermarket automotive brakes/linings, commercial use and disposal of other vehicle friction products and commercial and consumer use and disposal of other gaskets.
- The Agency also determined that the remaining 16 COUs do not present unreasonable risk. Chrysotile asbestos COUs in Part 1 of the risk evaluation that do not pose an unreasonable risk include the import of raw chrysotile asbestos, the import and distribution of the chrysotile asbestos-containing products evaluated, the use and disposal of brakes for a specialized NASA transport plane, and the disposal of sheet gaskets processed and/or used in the industrial setting.
- These unreasonable risks include the risk of mesothelioma, lung cancer, and other cancers from chronic inhalation.
- EPA released the draft risk evaluation for asbestos April 3, 2020 for a 60-day public comment period. Additionally, EPA held a peer review meeting of the Science Advisory Committee on Chemicals (SACC) on the draft risk evaluation on June 8-11, 2020. Along with the final risk evaluation, EPA is releasing a document that provides a response to public and peer review comments.

## **BACKGROUND**

- Asbestos is currently manufactured, processed, distributed, used, and disposed of as part of industrial, commercial, and consumer conditions of use.
- There is no domestic mining of asbestos; 100% of all imported raw asbestos (all chrysotile asbestos) is used in the manufacture of chlor-alkali diaphragms (100 metric tons in 2019). The other product use categories are imported articles containing chrysotile, including chlor-alkali diaphragms, sheet gaskets, other gaskets, oilfield brake blocks, aftermarket automotive brakes/linings, and other vehicle friction products.
- For this final risk evaluation for Asbestos Part 1: Chrysotile Asbestos, EPA assessed only chrysotile asbestos conditions of use because it is the only form of asbestos known to be imported, processed, or distributed for use in the United States.
- Risk management steps for the final risk evaluation for Asbestos Part 1: Chrysotile Asbestos:
  - With the issuance of the final risk evaluation, EPA is now initiating the process to address the unreasonable risks identified. EPA has two years following the issuance of the final risk evaluation to address, by rule, the unreasonable risk identified.