



Media Release

27 July, 2015

STOP PLAYING WITH CANCER!

Asbestos victims support groups, trade unions and UK campaigning bodies are urging local authorities, government agencies and market surveillance bodies to prioritize the threat posed by the possible asbestos contamination of UK imports.

An exposé in the United States earlier this month documented the presence of various types of asbestos fibres in crayons and toy fingerprinting kits imported from China.¹ Previously, Korean researchers identified asbestos contamination in baby powder from China² and authorities in Italy, Spain and Ireland seized toxic thermos flasks also sourced from China.³ It is relevant to note that not only is China the world's second biggest asbestos user, consuming over one million tonnes in 2013 and 2014, but China is also now the UK's second largest import partner accounting for 7% of all UK imports in 2014.⁴ **How many of these imports contain asbestos?**⁵

Research undertaken last week revealed that products marketed by the toxic brands can be purchased online in the UK. Expressing the concerns of UK victims, John Flanagan from the Forum of Asbestos Victims' Support Groups said:

“Thousands of people die every year because of past asbestos exposure at work and at home. Despite the UK asbestos ban, hazardous exposures to asbestos continue through lax enforcement of legislation and employer negligence. If these crayons are being imported to the USA and Australia, it is possible they are also finding their way into the UK. The Government needs to assure people that these products are not being sold here and confirm the measures being taken to monitor imports from China and other countries to ensure that no products containing asbestos reach this country.”

Echoing these remarks, Julie Winn, Chair of The Joint Union Asbestos Committee (JUAC), noted that:

“JUAC is concerned not only with the condition and management of the asbestos in UK schools but also with the inadvertent introduction of asbestos into schools. For decades we have known talc, used in the manufacture of some crayons outside the UK, can be contaminated with asbestos fibres. Global internet sales mean that such products can still find their way insidiously into our schools and homes. Despite warnings from the Department for Health and JUAC about the dangers of

¹ *Tests Find Asbestos in Kids' Crayons, Crime Scene Kits*. July 2015.

<http://www.asbestosnation.org/facts/tests-find-asbestos-in-kids-crayons-crime-scene-kits/>

² *Asbestos found in baby powder talc*. April 2, 2009.

<http://koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/news/article/article.aspx?aid=2903094>

³ EUROPE Consumer Affairs. *Safeguarding Consumers' Interests*. 2012.

http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/dyna/rapex/rapex_search_print_en.cfm?zoek=asbestos

⁴ *How important is China to the UK economy?* 09 June 2015.

<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/international-transactions/outward-foreign-affiliates-statistics/how-important-is-china-to-the-uk-economy/-sty-china.html>

⁵ *Biggest Trends in British Trade*. November 11, 2014.

<http://www.theweek.co.uk/uk-news/your-business/61274/biggest-trends-in-british-trade>

WW11 gas mask also known to contain asbestos, WW11 gas masks are still for sale on our internet sites. More recently in an effort to circumvent new restrictions sellers are attempting to remove the asbestos themselves and then declaring the gas masks 'safe' - nothing could be further from the truth. It is time now for a national campaign to raise public awareness about the real dangers from asbestos in our schools and homes - it simply is not good enough for a few to know the truth and for the rest to be kept in the dark."

"In 2015, there can be no excuse for the sale of asbestos-contaminated products in the UK," said Laurie Kazan-Allen of the International Ban Asbestos Secretariat. "Those people guilty of importing or selling these goods should face prison sentences for illegally flouting the asbestos prohibitions and endangering the lives of British citizens."

Notes to Editors

1. Asbestos, an acknowledged carcinogen, has created the UK's most deadly epidemic of occupational disease. Exposure to asbestos can cause a variety of cancers and respiratory diseases, the worst of which are fatal, the rest of which can be grossly debilitating.
2. After more than a century, the use of asbestos was finally banned in the UK by The Asbestos (Prohibitions) (Amendment) Regulations 1999. Prior to that, seven million tonnes of asbestos fibre had been used of which 2% was crocidolite, 8% amosite and 90% chrysotile (white) asbestos.
3. The contaminated products identified in the U.S were:
Amscan Crayons (4 pieces)
Disney Mickey Mouse Clubhouse 10 Jumbo Crayons
Nickelodeon Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle Crayons (5 composites)
Saban's Power Rangers Super Megaforce 10 Jumbo Crayons
Inside Intelligence Secret Spy Kit—white fingerprint powder
EduScience Deluxe Forensics Lab Kit— Black fingerprint powder
4. As of July 23, 2015, the following products were available in the UK online:
 - NEW Amscan Disney Mickey Mouse Colour Set/ Crayon
 - Nickelodeon Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles Wax Crayons
 - Saban's Power Rangers Samurai Black Paper Coloring with 8 bright crayons
 - EDU Science Crime Lab Fingerprint Kit
 - Secret Spy Super Kit, Inside Intelligence, Fingerprint Kit, Color Code Messages
5. For more information, please contact:
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