

APMF guidance for labelling paints containing isothiazolinones

Background

Isothiazolinones are used as a preservative in a wide range of consumer and industrial products, including cosmetics, shampoos, cleaners, detergents, and water-based paints.

In water-based paints, isothiazolinones are used to prevent the growth of bacteria that will spoil paint in the can during storage and transportation. Isothiazolinones may also keep fungi, algae and other micro-organisms from growing on the dry-film painted surface after application.

Bacterial growth in stored paint may impact its functionality, colour, viscosity, and PH and cause unpleasant odours.

Health concerns

Concerns regarding the rise in the rate of skin sensitisation to certain isothiazolinones have emerged internationally. Individuals who are susceptible to skin sensitisation may experience localised contact dermatitis when exposed to isothiazolinones. Following repeated exposure, an allergic skin reaction may occur.

The Commonwealth Department of Health's Tier III health assessment of isothiazolinones¹ evaluated the risk associated with isothiazolinones in various products. It made recommendations regarding the labelling of products containing these substances.

Labelling guidance

To provide consistent messaging to consumers regarding the paints containing isothiazolinones, manufacturers should include one of the following warnings statements, or a statement that reflects the same intent, on products based on the threshold set out in the table below:

"CONTAINS ISOTHIAZOLINONES – MAY CAUSE ALLERGIC SKIN REACTION"

"CONTAINS ISOTHIAZOLINONES – MAY CAUSE ALLERGIC REACTION"

"CONTAINS ISOTHIAZOLINONES REPEATED EXPOSURE MAY CAUSE SENSITISATION"

Substance	CAS No	Threshold
MIT	2682-20-4	Concentration \geq 15 ppm
CIT/MIT	26172-55-4 26530-03-0 26172-54-3	Concentration \geq 15 ppm
BIT	2634-33-5	Concentration \geq 500 ppm
OIT	26530-20-1	Concentration \geq 500 ppm
DCOIT	64359-81-5	Concentration \geq 15 ppm

The above thresholds will ensure consistent adoption of warning messages for industrial and consumer paints, under the *Globally Harmonised System of Classification and Labelling Chemicals* (GHS). However, following the Department of Health recommendations, industrial and dual-use (i.e. industrial and consumer) paints should identify the specific name of the substance, rather than the generic term "Isothiazolinones"

¹

https://www.industrialchemicals.gov.au/sites/default/files/Isothiazolinones_%20Human%20health%20tier%200III%20assessment.pdf