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Acrylamide Confirmed as the 30th Candidate List SVHC

The European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) announced on 30 March 2010 that acrylamide (EC 201-173-7, CAS 79-06-1) is now included in the Candidate List as the 30th substance of very high concern (SVHC).

The decision as to whether acrylamide needs to be subjected to authorisation will be taken later.

Background of Inclusion

As reported earlier (Standards Info Bulletin issue January 2010) acrylamide was originally one of the fifteen SVHCs announced in December last year by the ECHA in the second series of substances to be added to the Candidate List.

However, the President of General Court of the European Union suspended its inclusion when a French acrylamide producer and an industry association filed to the Court for an annulment of the acrylamide listing, claiming the inclusion would be illegal according to the REACH regulation.

While the main case is still ongoing, the Court has since dismissed the claimants' related application for interim measures (Case T-1/10R), which was originally made to prevent the companies in the industry from financial damages as a result of acrylamide being included on the Candidate List, and thereby allowing acrylamide to be included in the Candidate List.

This means the Candidate List now contains 30 substances.

Main applications of acrylamide

The principle use of acrylamide is in the manufacturing of polyacrylamide polymer, which has major applications such as wastewater treatment, paper and pulp processing and mineral processing.

Minor applications of polyacrylamide include crude oil production, cosmetic additives, soil and sand stabilization, coating and paints, textile processing and as electrophoresis gels in scientific research.

Acrylamide is also used in acrylamide-base grouts. The grout polymerises to form a stiff gel that is impervious to water, making it suitable for structural water control and geotechnical grouting operations such as tunneling projects, repair of sewers and rising damp treatment in buildings. However, this use has decreased in recent years.

Articles suppliers' obligations

The inclusion of acrylamide in the Candidate List means since 30 March 2010, the same obligations that apply to all Candidate List SVHCs also apply to articles that contain acrylamide, namely:

If an SVHC on the Candidate List is present at > 0.1% by weight of the product, the following information must be communicated to the (professional) recipient of the article immediately or within 45 days upon request by a consumer:

the name of the SVHC as a minimum; and sufficient information, available to the supplier, that allows the safe use of the article.

From 1 June, 2011, if an SVHC on the Candidate List is present at > 0.1% by weight of the article, and the quantity of the SVHC totals over one tonne per year per (EU) manufacturer/importer, notification to the ECHA is required.

Further information can be found at the following websites:

- ECHA's press release on the inclusion of acrylamide: http://echa.europa.eu/doc/press/pr_10_05_acrylamide_20100330.pdf
- The Official Candidate List: http://echa.europa.eu/chem_data/authorisation_process/candidate_list_table_en.asp

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