

Press release from Jan de Beer, cell 082 456 3677:

COATINGS INDUSTRY REASSURANCE ON SAFETY OF TITANIUM DIOXIDE

The SA Paint Manufacturing Association (SAPMA) has issued official reassurance to the public and its members that the inclusion of titanium dioxide as a white pigment in some industrial paints holds absolutely no health risks to anyone exposed to such paints.

Deryck Spence, executive director of SAPMA, says SAPMA has been informed by the British Coatings Federation (BCF) that the European Chemical Agency (ECA) had recommended that any EU product containing titanium dioxide should carry labelling warning that the product is “suspected of causing cancer by inhalation”. The ECA’s recommendation is only the first step in the regulatory process but both BCF and SAPMA have decided to immediately refute this opinion.

“SAPMA felt it was important to immediately advise members and the public who may have noted the ECA stance on the compound, that once titanium dioxide has been incorporated in paint or ink, there is no risk of the solid particles of the substance being inhaled,” Spence stated.

He says titanium dioxide is an inert inorganic compound used as a white pigment in many industrial applications, including the manufacture of paints, coatings, printing inks and wall coverings where it provides essential product properties such as whiteness, covering power, brightness, stability and durability of colour not achievable with other raw materials. Titanium dioxide is also used in many other consumer products.

The BCF statement says during the manufacturing process, exposure to titanium dioxide powder might occur. However, studies over many years have not found any correlation between workers exposed to titanium dioxide and the risk of lung cancer. In addition, BCF feels that the tests on rats cited by ECHA in its official opposition to the substance, were conducted using “unrealistically high amounts” of titanium dioxide that would not be allowed in any manufacturing environment.

Based on this, BCF and CEPE (the European organisation of paints, inks, and artists colours producers) consider the use of titanium dioxide to be safe for workers during the manufacturing process. This is further supported by the ongoing commitment of BCF and CEPE member companies to take every precaution to ensure the safety of their products and workers throughout their supply chain.

SAPMA’s Spence added: “SAPMA fully supports the BCF decision to challenge any proposed legislation on this specific element. We would also strongly oppose any such proposed labelling if were to be considered in South Africa in future.”

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