

Existing Chemicals

Perfluorooctanyl sulfonate (PFOS)

Perfluorooctanyl sulfonate (PFOS) is a member of a large family of perfluorooctanyl sulfonate chemicals. These chemicals have been used in a variety of industrial, commercial and consumer products in Australia.

The 3M Company is the largest worldwide producer of PFOS chemicals. The 3M Company stopped manufacturing PFOS chemicals in December 2000 because of concerns about their persistence in the environment and long-term health and environmental effects. PFOS does not biodegrade in the environment.

In Australia, PFOS has been a component of the Scotchgard™ range of products and is an ingredient of some industrial additives, Aqueous Film Forming fire fighting Foams (AFFF™) and Alcohol-Type Concentrate (ATC™) fire fighting foams produced by the 3M Company. AFFF™ and ATC™ fire fighting foams are used to extinguish Class B fires that involve flammable fuels.

The Scotchgard™ brand continues to be used by 3M Company in the Australian market, except as described below, but replacement products do not contain PFOS chemicals. 3M Australia advise that PFOS has been removed from all consumer Scotchgard™ products in Australia except for Scotchgard™ Spot Remover. This product will be phased out in Australia by September 2002.

There are now only two industrial/commercial uses of PFOS-based Scotchgard™ in Australia. These are for protecting textiles and leather and will be phased out in Australia by September 2002 and March 2003, respectively.

All other PFOS-containing products (including fire fighting foams and industrial additives) will be phased out in Australia by December 2003.

Scotchban™ was a PFOS-containing product supplied by 3M to treat paper containers for fast and pet food. Scotchban™ is no longer sold in Australia and has not been used to treat paper since September 2000.

To assist in a risk assessment by users of PFOS-based products, data on health effects and handling of PFOS-based products can be obtained from the relevant and most recent 3M Company Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) and from 3M Australia (<http://www.3m.com/intl/AU/>). Specific respiratory, hand and eye protection and exposure controls are contained in the relevant MSDSs.

Existing Chemicals

Perfluorooctanyl sulfonate (PFOS)

The Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing, via NICNAS, has been actively involved in the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) assessment of PFOS.

From July 2000, the OECD has been leading an international collaboration on the scientific assessment of PFOS chemicals. This involves Australia and approximately 40 other parties including Canada, Japan, United States and the European Community and will facilitate a consistent approach worldwide to the concerns presented by PFOS chemicals.

The OECD assessment of PFOS chemicals addresses the human, animal and environmental hazards of PFOS. It contains environmental exposure and fate, human monitoring and health hazard information. Occupational, non-occupational exposure, epidemiology and animal toxicology studies of PFOS are addressed in the draft assessment report.

In November 2002, the OECD is scheduled to formalise the PFOS assessment report and address risk-based management of the chemical. Once the OECD assessment is finalised, NICNAS will consider regulatory actions, if any, to be taken on PFOS chemicals in Australia.

In addition to the current OECD assessment of PFOS, NICNAS notes similar international concerns for perfluorooctanoate (PFOA) and telomer chemistries which are utilised by a number of manufacturers. Both PFOA and telomers may be affected by ongoing reviews of these related chemistries. NICNAS recommends that users consider these comments when investigating PFOS alternatives.

If you want to find out more about PFOS, you can contact NICNAS at:

Ph: 1800 638 528 **Fax:** 02 8577 8888

Write to: GPO Box 58 Sydney NSW 2001 Australia

Information on assessment of chemicals by NICNAS is available at:

<http://www.nicnas.gov.au/about/ourapproach.htm>