

Annex to ECHA/PR/15/16

Background information on bisphenol A and thermal paper

Helsinki, 7 December 2015

Bisphenol A

Bisphenol A (4,4'-isopropylidenediphenol) is a chemical of longstanding. It is widely used and has been the subject of many studies.

BPA is primarily used in the manufacture of polycarbonate and epoxy resins. The amount of BPA used in thermal paper is minor (about 0.2% of the total volume of BPA in the EU). However, despite the low volumes used in thermal paper, exposure to BPA from thermal papers is important since it can migrate from the paper to the skin upon contact.

Regulatory context

In March 2014, RAC adopted an opinion to strengthen the existing harmonised classification and labelling of BPA from a category 2 to a category 1B reproductive toxicant in line with a proposal from the French competent authority. In addition, a substance evaluation of BPA was carried out by the German competent authority in 2012. As a result of this evaluation, ECHA issued a decision in December 2013 to request that companies provide further data on BPA in the areas of skin absorption and environmental exposure. Furthermore, an alternative for BPA, called bisphenol S (4,4'-sulfonyldiphenol), is currently being evaluated by the Belgian Competent Authority.

In January 2015, the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) published a scientific opinion on the risk to public health associated with BPA exposure. They concluded that there was no health concern from dietary exposure and low health concern from aggregated exposure. Key elements of EFSA's opinion were taken into account in the RAC opinion.

Thermal paper

Thermal paper is a paper coated with a reactive layer that changes colour when exposed to heat. Thermal paper is used in many applications such as point-of-sale tickets and receipts, self-adhesive labels, lottery tickets or fax paper. BPA is the most common dye developer in thermal paper, although alternatives are being found and it is increasingly being replaced by safer alternatives. BPA is typically present in a concentration of 1-2% by weight.

RAC's opinion, March 2014

http://echa.europa.eu/en/view-article/-/journal_content/title/rac-proposes-to-strengthen-the-classification-of-bisphenol-a

ECHA's decision to request further data on bisphenol, A December 2013

http://echa.europa.eu/information-on-chemicals/evaluation/community-rolling-action-plan/corap-table/-/substance-rev/3015/del/200/col/synonymDynamicField_606/type/asc/pre/1/view

CoRAP - bisphenol S (4,4'-sulfonyldiphenol), currently being evaluated by the Belgian competent authority

http://echa.europa.eu/information-on-chemicals/evaluation/community-rolling-action-plan/corap-table/-/substance-rev/3018/del/200/col/synonymDynamicField_606/type/asc/pre/1/view