

## Compliance Guide for Hybrid Flooring products containing Silica

With much concern raised regarding silica content in concrete products and more recently in manufactured stone composite bench tops – that have resulted in serious illness and death, the microscope has been turned on all things that may contain silica.

Within the timber flooring industry, hybrid flooring products (a timber look alike product) have been identified as products that may contain small traces of crystalline silica. These products include (but are not limited to):

- LVT – Luxury vinyl tile
- WPC – wood plastic composite flooring
- SPC – solid polymer core flooring
- Rigid plank or core

These and other plastic or vinyl based products already on the market and others set to join it, are generally formulated with plasticizers, stabilisers and more, that often contain small elements of limestone, and this is where crystalline silica may naturally occur.

Whereas wet cutting concrete and kitchen bench tops together with wearing Respiratory Protective Equipment (RPE) is working to reduce and hopefully prevent further cases of silicosis, the issue with hybrid flooring products is that they are unlikely to be wet cut, raising the concern over creating dust that may contain crystalline silica particles. As such, it is essential that approved RPE is worn when cutting, penetrating or grinding these products.

Crystalline silica is found naturally in stone, rock, sand, gravel and clay. As mentioned above, it may become part of hybrid flooring products via the use of limestone. When these materials are worked on, the concern becomes the creation of fine silica dust that can be easily breathed into our respiratory system.

Use of these products by contractors and clean-up after use (to ensure the safety of property owners) is therefore essential.

The following products have undergone endorsed third party testing to verify that their product(s) fall beneath the Safe Work Australia exposure standard for respirable crystalline silica, which specifies they must not exceed 0.1 mg/m<sup>3</sup> (eight hour time weighted average), and NZ Worksafe workplace exposure standard of 0.05 mg/m<sup>3</sup>. These have been assessed by the respective testing agency's as falling beneath the detection limit.

Product Manufacturer /Importer	Type	website	Testing facility
Auswood	Brumby LUX SPC	<a href="https://www.auswood.com.au/brumby-range">https://www.auswood.com.au/brumby-range</a>	Airsafe
Auswood	Brumby 5G SPC	<a href="https://www.auswood.com.au/brumby-range">https://www.auswood.com.au/brumby-range</a>	Airsafe
Embelton Flooring	Aqua-tuf SPC	<a href="https://www.embelton.com/shop/section/6/1/Hybrid">https://www.embelton.com/shop/section/6/1/Hybrid</a>	Greencap Pty Ltd
Embelton Flooring	Resilience SPC	<a href="https://www.embelton.com/shop/section/6/1/Hybrid">https://www.embelton.com/shop/section/6/1/Hybrid</a>	Greencap Pty Ltd
Embelton Flooring	Atlantis WPC	<a href="https://www.embelton.com/shop/section/6/1/Hybrid">https://www.embelton.com/shop/section/6/1/Hybrid</a>	Greencap Pty Ltd
Floating Floors	Solcora Rigid Core PVC	<a href="https://solcora.com/au/collection/">https://solcora.com/au/collection/</a>	Microanalysis Australia
Premium Floors	Titan Rigid LVT	<a href="https://www.premiumfloors.com.au/brands/titan-vinyl/">https://www.premiumfloors.com.au/brands/titan-vinyl/</a>	Greencap Pty Ltd

Manufacturers and importers of these products across Australasia have been invited to provide independent lab testing to verify the silica content of their products, and to ensure safety for use in Australia and New Zealand. To date, only the companies listed in this table have addressed this important initiative.