

# **Safety in the use of synthetic vitreous fibre insulation wools (glass wool, rock wool, slag wool)**



International  
Labour  
Office  
Geneva

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ILO

*Safety in the use of synthetic vitreous fibre insulation wools (glass wool, rock wool, slag wool).*

ILO code of practice

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Code of practice, occupational safety, occupational health, synthetic organic fibres.

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## Preface

This ILO code of practice defines major principles and approaches concerning safety requirements and precautions in the use of insulation wools (glass wool, rock wool and slag wool). It provides practical control measures to minimize occupational exposure to fibres and dusts from insulation wools, prevent irritation and discomfort, and avert any long-term health risks involved in working with such products. The code promotes an integrated approach, taking account of the fact that synthetic vitreous fibre insulation wools do not appear in the workplace in their pure forms but rather as a product with mixed components. Emphasis is placed on addressing all the hazards arising from the product (insulation fibres, binders and other materials), taking account of real work situations.

This code was adopted unanimously by a Meeting of Experts on Safety in the Use of Insulation Wools, held in Geneva from 17 to 26 January 2000.<sup>1</sup> The good spirit of

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<sup>1</sup> *Experts nominated by governments:*

- Mr. Jean-François Certin, Consulting Engineer, Laboratoire interregional de chimie de l'Ouest, CRAM des pays de la Loire, Nantes (France).  
Dr. Chaityuth Chavalitnitikul, Senior Expert on Occupational Safety and Health, Department of Labour Protection and Welfare, Bangkok (Thailand).  
Dr. Norihiko Kohyama, Director of Division of Work Environment Evaluation, National Institute of Industrial Health, Ministry of Labour, Kawasaki (Japan).  
Dr. Rolf Packroff, Federal Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, Dortmund (Germany).  
Dr. Loretta Schuman, Directorate of Health Standards Programs, US Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), US Department of Labor, Washington, DC (United States).  
Mr. Yuriy Tsybulya, Director, Small Venture "BEIM Ltd.", Kotsubinskoe, Kiev region (Ukraine).  
Mr. Jesús Zepeda Vera, Deputy Director of Research and Development on Occupational Health Standards, Secretariat of Labour and Social Protection, General Directorate of Occupational Safety and Health, Federal District (Mexico).

*Experts nominated by the employers:*

- Mr. Tom Calzavara, CIH, Johns Manville Corporation, Technical Center, Littleton, CO (United States).  
Dr. Vermund Digernes, Assistant Director, Occupational Medicine, Federation of Norwegian Process Industries (PIL), Oslo (Norway).  
Dr. Utz Draeger, Head of the Industrial Medicine Department, Deutsche Rockwool-Mineralwoll-GmbH, Gladbeck (Germany).

*Adviser:*

- Dr. Rainer Dorn, Manager, Department of Environment, Occupational Health and Safety and Dangerous Substances, Grünzweig & Hartmann AG, Ludwigshafen (Germany).  
Mr. Kevin Heribert, Executive Director, Fibreglass and Rockwool Insulation Manufacturers' Association (FARIMA), North Sydney (Australia).  
Mr. Charles Houghton, Regulatory Affairs Leader, Europe, Owens-Corning Building Products Ltd. (UK), St. Helens (United Kingdom).  
Mr. Aymon de Reydellet, ISOVER-Saint Gobain, Environnement & Risques Industriels, Paris (France).  
Dr. Anthony R. Wells, Owens-Corning Canada, Toronto (Canada).

*Experts nominated by the workers:*

- Mr. Dave Bennett, National Director, Health, Safety and Environment, Canadian Labour Congress, Ottawa (Canada).  
Mr. Justin Daerden, Centrale chrétienne des travailleurs du bois et du bâtiment, Brussels (Belgium).  
Mr. Bernd Eisenbach, Trade Union for Building, Forestry, Agriculture and the Environment (IG-BAU), Frankfurt am Main (Germany).

## Insulation wools

cooperation among all participants paved the way for moving from the divergent initial positions towards the consensus necessary for the code to be useful for all and effectively applied. The Governing Body of the ILO approved the publication of the code at its 277th Session (March 2000).

The Meeting recommended that the present code be widely distributed. Follow-up procedures, including regional meetings and conferences, should be held to assess its effectiveness and to review it in the light of future developments in science and technology. The experts also suggested that the ILO should produce new codes of practice to address other synthetic and organic fibres not covered by existing ILO instruments, such as refractory ceramic fibres, cellulose and silicon carbide.

The code specifies general duties for manufacturers, suppliers, specifiers, employers, workers and the competent authorities, all of whom have an important role to play in maintaining safety in the entire process, from manufacture to waste disposal. The perspective has thus been enlarged in order to establish a proper chain of responsibility so that the diversified situations prevailing in various countries will be covered.

The general measures of prevention and protection specified by the code, and the relevant information included in the appendices (systems of classification, exposure data and risk assessment), are of particular use to developing countries and countries in transition. The code emphasizes that such measures should be consistent with the classification and potential health effects of the insulation wools, and the competent

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*From 17 to 18 January 2000:*

Mr. Kurt Jakobsen, Trade Union of Plumbers in Denmark, Hvidovre (Denmark).

*From 19 to 26 January 2000:*

Mr. Lars Vedsmand, Occupational Health and Safety Officer, Bygge-, Anlaegs-og Traekartellet (BAT) secretariat, Copenhagen (Denmark).

*From 18 to 20 January 2000:*

Mr. Anton Korntheuer, Building and Wood Workers' Trade Union (GBH), Vienna (Austria).

Mr. Chris Northover, Forest and Forest Products Division of the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU), Melbourne (Australia).

Mr. Samy Santanasamy, Union of Employees in Construction Industry (UECI), Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia).

*International governmental and non-governmental organizations represented:*

World Health Organization (WHO).

International Organisation of Employers (IOE).

European Insulation Manufacturers Association (EURIMA).

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