

# > Quick Guide Group Standards

Preventing or managing risk to people and the environment

The Hazardous Substances and New Organisms (HSNO) Act 1996 covers the safe management of hazardous substances. This includes products that are flammable, oxidising, corrosive, toxic and harmful to the environment.

Over 100,000 hazardous substances are now managed under group standard approvals. So, if you import, manufacture, store, supply or use hazardous substances or chemicals, you should be aware of group standards and how they work.

## What is a group standard?

A group standard is an approval for a group of hazardous substances of a similar type or nature, or that are used in a similar way. For example, paints and the raw ingredients used in paint manufacture are now controlled under a group standard.

Group standards may apply to one or more of the following hazardous substances or products:

- an existing hazardous substance that was previously covered by the transitional provisions of the Act;
- a new hazardous substance;
- a hazardous substance that is already approved under the Act;
- a product that is, contains, incorporates or includes a hazardous substance. This may include a manufactured article, a waste product, or a manufacturing by-product.

On 1 July 2006, ERMA New Zealand issued group standards for 30 different categories of hazardous substances. When a substance is 'assigned' to a group standard,<sup>1</sup> it is deemed an approved substance under HSNO.

## How do group standards manage risks?

Group standards set conditions to manage risks to people and the environment from hazardous substances. They cover a substance's full lifecycle, from its manufacture or importation, to storage, transportation and use, through to final disposal. The conditions cover matters such as how to label a substance, or whether a user needs protective clothing. If the substance is flammable, the conditions say what needs to be done to avoid a fire.

The conditions are generally based on the Hazardous Substances Regulations, but are written in a more user-friendly way. In some cases, particularly for information requirements, the conditions are more prescriptive than the regulations.

The conditions of a group standard must be complied with, and are legally enforceable.

<sup>1</sup> A substance is considered to be 'assigned' to a group standard if it meets the scope of the group standard.

## What substances are covered?

Group standards cover a wide variety of products used in many different situations – everything from substances for home use, such as detergents and drain cleaners, to highly specialised industrial chemicals. There are group standards for paints, adhesives, flavours and fragrances, lubricants, industrial and domestic cleaners, cosmetics, polymers and many more.

Currently, there are 200 group standards, covering 30 categories of substances. Most categories are based on the use of a substance. For example, there are separate group standards for cleaning products, leather and textile products, and water treatment chemicals.

A smaller number of group standards are based solely on a substance's hazardous properties, rather than the way it's used. For example, group standards for aerosols include substances with quite different uses, such as spray paints and aerosol cleaning products.

### Box 1: Categories for which group standards have been developed

Additives, Process Chemicals and Raw Materials	Fire Fighting Chemicals
Aerosols	Food Additives and Fragrance Materials
Animal Nutritional and Animal Care Products	Fuel Additives
Class 4 Substances	Industrial and Institutional Cleaning Products
Class 5.1.1 Oxidising Substances	Laboratory Chemicals and Reagent Kits
Class 5.2 Organic Peroxides	Leather and Textile Products
Cleaning Products	Lubricants
Compressed Gas Mixtures	Metal Industry Products
Construction Products	N.O.S. (Not Otherwise Specified) Substances
Corrosion Inhibitors	Photographic Chemicals
Cosmetic Products	Polymers
Denatured Ethanol	Refining Catalysts
Dental Products	Solvents
Embalming Products	Surface Coatings and Colourants
Fertilisers	Water Treatment Chemicals

## How do I find out about group standards covering substances I use?

A full list of group standards is available on ERMA New Zealand's website, at [www.ermanz.govt.nz/hs/groupstandards](http://www.ermanz.govt.nz/hs/groupstandards) – they're also available on a user-friendly CD – contact ERMA New Zealand to request a copy, or download the CD's contents from [www.ermanz.govt.nz/hs/groupstandards](http://www.ermanz.govt.nz/hs/groupstandards)

## What does a group standard contain?

Each group standard has the following sections:

**The Group Standard** – the title of the group standard, its HSNO approval number, the date it came into force (1 July 2006) and its scope. The scope defines the types of substances covered by the group standard, their hazardous properties and uses. For a hazardous substance to be approved under a group standard, it **must** meet the scope of the group standard.

**Schedule 1: Conditions of the group standard** – the requirements that any substance belonging to the group standard must comply with. The conditions are set out in 10 parts:

- Part 1 Information requirements
- Part 2 Site and storage
- Part 3 Approved handler and tracking
- Part 4 Packaging
- Part 5 Equipment
- Part 6 Transportation
- Part 7 Disposal
- Part 8 Exposure limits
- Part 9 Notification to the Authority
- Part 10 Other matters.

**Schedule 2: Transitional conditions** – the provisions for staged implementation.

**Schedule 3: Interpretation** – the definitions and terms used in the group standard.

**Explanatory Note** – this section provides simple guidance for users. It may include the types of products that are covered, the packing group and UN numbers of substances, and information on where to obtain copies of the group standard and related material.

## Group standards incorporate material by reference

Other requirements of a group standard may be placed on an importer, manufacturer or person handling a hazardous substance by referencing to specific requirements given in a separate document or publication. Where such material is referenced as a condition of the group standard, you must comply with those requirements. They may include:

- site and storage conditions – the means for managing physical hazards such as flammability, and the requirements for emergency management and signage;
- Schedule 8 of the Dangerous Goods and Scheduled Toxic Substances Transfer Notice covering controls for stationary container systems; and
- Tracking, Tank Wagon and Compressed Gas Regulations.

## When do group standards come into effect?

Although group standards were introduced on 1 July 2006, their conditions are being progressively implemented (staged implementation), giving industry time to adjust to the new system. Some conditions come into effect on 1 January 2007. Others will become operational over the next few years. See Box 2 for the dates for staged implementation.

Staged implementation only applies to substances that were in lawful use in New Zealand immediately before 1 July 2006.

For further information, see [www.ermanz.govt.nz/hs/groupstandards/staged.html](http://www.ermanz.govt.nz/hs/groupstandards/staged.html)

## How do group standards apply to new hazardous substances?

If you import or manufacture a hazardous substance for the first time after 1 July 2006, your substance can be approved under a group standard. Any new hazardous substance which meets the scope of a group standard is an approved substance. The scope of a group standard basically sets out the allowed hazardous properties of the substance (eg whether it can be flammable, or toxic) and its uses.

For a new substance to be approved under a group standard, it must:

- be used for the purpose given in the group standard, and meet the relevant definition(s);
- comply with any use restrictions specified in the group standard. For example, group standards may exclude pesticide and veterinary medicine actives and formulated pesticide and veterinary medicine products;
- have only those hazardous properties that are specifically allowed under the scope of the group standard. Not all HSNO hazardous properties are included within the scope of the group standards issued by the Authority on 1 July 2006;<sup>2</sup>
- if it is a hazardous chemical, be listed on the Inventory of Chemicals, [www.ermanz.govt.nz/hs/compliance/inventory.html](http://www.ermanz.govt.nz/hs/compliance/inventory.html). Any chemical that is 'new' to New Zealand (ie not listed on the Inventory) must have an individual HSNO approval before it can be imported or manufactured here.

## How do I get a new hazardous substance approved?

If you want to manufacture a new hazardous substance, or import it into New Zealand, it's your responsibility to identify whether it is covered by a group standard. You will need to classify the substance using its composition, or from other hazard information such as that on a safety data sheet. A new substance can be assigned to any of the group standards for the categories given in Box 1, other than the N.O.S. group standards.<sup>3</sup>

If you'd prefer not to self-classify your substance, or want ERMA New Zealand to confirm your self-classification, our Status of Substance Service can give you the product's HSNO classification and the group standard that it may be approved under. See [www.ermanz.govt.nz/hs/applications/status-of-substance.html](http://www.ermanz.govt.nz/hs/applications/status-of-substance.html) for more information.

It is the responsibility of the importer or manufacturer to make sure that their hazardous substance is assigned to a group standard and has a HSNO approval.

When a manufacturer or importer assigns a substance to a group standard, they must keep a record of this. There is no requirement to inform ERMA New Zealand, unless the substance contains a hazardous chemical that is not listed on the Inventory of Chemicals. See [www.ermanz.govt.nz/hs/compliance/inventory.html](http://www.ermanz.govt.nz/hs/compliance/inventory.html) for more information.

<sup>2</sup> See [www.ermanz.govt.nz/hs/groupstandards/notincluded.html](http://www.ermanz.govt.nz/hs/groupstandards/notincluded.html)

<sup>3</sup> The N.O.S. group standards were developed solely for the completion of the transfer of substances. They are not available for new substances that are imported or manufactured for the first time after 1 July 2006.

## Box 2: Dates for staged implementation

1 July 2006	Group standards issued. Six-month period commences before any conditions apply. Persons continue to comply with current regulatory requirements.
1 January 2007	Approved handler test certificates required (either deemed <sup>1</sup> or full five year certificate). <sup>2</sup>  Compliance required with all conditions, with the exception of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• test certificates for hazardous substance locations;<sup>2</sup></li> <li>• stationary bulk container systems;</li> <li>• emergency management;<sup>2</sup></li> <li>• signage;<sup>2</sup> and</li> <li>• labelling, safety data sheets and packaging.</li> </ul>
1 July 2007	Compliance required with emergency management conditions <sup>2</sup> (fire extinguishers, response plans and secondary containment).
1 January 2008	Test certificates required for hazardous substance location. <sup>2</sup>
1 July 2008	Report required from test certifier for existing stationary bulk container systems.  Compliance required with conditions for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• labelling;<sup>3,4</sup></li> <li>• safety data sheets;</li> <li>• signage;<sup>2</sup> and</li> <li>• packaging.<sup>5</sup></li> </ul>
1 January 2009	Full five-year approved handler test certificate required.
1 July 2009	Test certificate required for existing stationary bulk container systems.
31 December 2010	Product labels are compliant to this date if they comply with the labelling requirements of Europe, Australia, USA or Canada. <sup>4</sup>  Specific packaging provisions (child resistant packaging and permanent identification) are compliant to this date if the packaging complies with the relevant packaging requirements of specified countries.

<sup>1</sup> A person with two years' experience in handling hazardous substances can deem themselves as an approved handler to 31 December 2008.

<sup>2</sup> Staged implementation provisions may not apply for approved handler test certificates, location test certificates, emergency management and signage if compliance is already required for a similar class of hazardous substance (for more details, see [www.ermanz.govt.nz/hs/groupstandards/staged.html](http://www.ermanz.govt.nz/hs/groupstandards/staged.html)).

<sup>3</sup> Other than for substances that comply with the labelling requirements of Europe, Australia, USA or Canada.

<sup>4</sup> A four-year period is allowed for compliance with labelling, provided that the product labels comply with the regulatory requirements for labelling that apply in these countries. This provision will apply to new products as well as substances that were in lawful use in New Zealand immediately before 1 July 2006. For the Cosmetic Products Groups Standard, this provision will apply indefinitely.

<sup>5</sup> Compliance is not required for child-resistant packaging or permanent identification of packaging if there is compliance with relevant packaging requirements from specified countries (see the individual group standards for details).

## What if the substance doesn't fit under any existing group standard?

If a new substance doesn't fit within the scope of an existing group standard, then the importer or manufacturer **must** apply to ERMA New Zealand for approval of the substance. You can apply for an amendment to an existing group standard, a new group standard or an approval under Part V of the Act.

If you find yourself in this situation, contact one of our hazardous substance advisors.

Although ERMA New Zealand developed the first group standards (Box 1), we envisage that in future, group standards will be developed by industry. If you have a product that doesn't fit into one of the 200 existing group standards, you can apply to ERMA New Zealand for a new one to be issued. Any person or organisation can make an application. An application fee will apply.

## Who enforces group standards?

Group standards are enforced in the same way as other HSNO approvals, by agencies specified in the Act. These include the Department of Labour (in workplaces), the Police (in motor and rail vehicles, or on roads and railway lines), and the Ministry of Health (to protect public health).

Further information on HSNO enforcement is available at [www.ermanz.govt.nz/hs/compliance/enforcement.html](http://www.ermanz.govt.nz/hs/compliance/enforcement.html)

## What is the New Zealand Inventory of Chemicals?

ERMA New Zealand has developed an inventory of chemicals known to be present in the country. This includes pure substances, and components of formulated products or preparations. The inventory is available at [www.ermanz.govt.nz/hs/compliance/inventory.html](http://www.ermanz.govt.nz/hs/compliance/inventory.html)

Group standards require that any substance that contains a chemical not listed on the Inventory of Chemicals (ie 'new' to New Zealand) must be notified to ERMA New Zealand. This must include the substance's name, and information on the new chemical, including its hazard properties. The importer or manufacturer responsible for ensuring that a new substance has a HSNO approval must also ensure that any new chemical in the substance is notified to ERMA New Zealand.

### Further information

Visit our website at [www.ermanz.govt.nz](http://www.ermanz.govt.nz), contact us on 0800 376 234 (Hazardous Substance compliance line), or email [hsinfo@ermanz.govt.nz](mailto:hsinfo@ermanz.govt.nz)

Additional compliance publications including Compliance Guides and Quick Guides are available at [www.ermanz.govt.nz/resources/compliance-pubs.asp](http://www.ermanz.govt.nz/resources/compliance-pubs.asp)

### Contact details



PO Box 131 Wellington | Phone: +64 4 916 2426 | Fax: +64 4 914 0433 | Email: [info@ermanz.govt.nz](mailto:info@ermanz.govt.nz)  
Website: [www.ermanz.govt.nz](http://www.ermanz.govt.nz)