



Persatuan Pengguna Pulau Pinang Consumers Association of Penang

檳城消費人協會 பினாங்கு பயனீட்டாளர் சங்கம்

10 Jalan Masjid Negeri, 11600 Pulau Pinang, Malaysia
Tel: 604-8299511
email: consumerofpenang@gmail.com

Website: (English, BM, Chinese & Tamil)
<https://consumer.org.my>

[facebook.com/ConsumerAssociationPenang](https://www.facebook.com/ConsumerAssociationPenang)
twitter.com/consumer_penang
[instagram.com/consumer_penang](https://www.instagram.com/consumer_penang)

Press Statement

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World Consumer Rights Day 2026: Addressing Asbestos Risks in Children's Play and Craft Sand Products

Ahead of World Consumer Rights Day (WCRD) 2026 on March 15, themed "Safe Products, Confident Consumers", the Consumers' Association of Penang (CAP) calls on the Malaysian government to ensure that all play and craft sand products available in the Malaysian market are free from asbestos, **one of the ten chemicals** or groups of chemicals of major public health concern, according to the World Health Organization (WHO).

Recent product recalls and market withdrawals in **Australia, New Zealand**, and the **United Kingdom** were made after laboratory tests of play and craft sand products detected traces of asbestos, in particular tremolite. Asbestos is a naturally occurring group of fibrous minerals that occurs in different mineral forms and fibre types. All asbestos fibre types, regardless of size, have the potential to pose a health risk if fibres become airborne and are inhaled.

Asbestos is officially classified by the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) as a Group 1 carcinogen, which means it is a known cause of cancer in humans. There is no known safe level of exposure to asbestos. The health risks to children are compounded by developmental vulnerability and frequent hand-to-mouth behaviours, increasing the likelihood of ingestion or inhalation, particularly for young children.

Asbestos-contaminated play and craft sand products have been recalled or removed and public warnings issued in these countries as a precaution to prevent exposure to asbestos. In Malaysia, however, these products continue to be widely sold in retail shops and online marketplaces. Products such as mouldable sensory sands (often labelled as kinetic or "magic" sand), sand art kits, and beach sand play sets remain popular across the country. These products are frequently used by young children for creative and sensory activities, increasing the likelihood of prolonged handling and potential exposure. The continued availability and use of these products in Malaysia highlights a concerning gap in local consumer safety enforcement.

This issue must be taken seriously in Malaysia. As the government is **reviewing** the continued use of asbestos-based materials and considering a phase-down approach to ban chrysotile, there is a need to conduct a study to identify products that contain asbestos. Since sand-based play and craft products have been highlighted to contain asbestos, the relevant authority should take measures to test these products to ensure they are free from asbestos, as young children, the primary users, are most vulnerable to its harmful effects.

For consumers who have purchased these products, we advise them to stop using any unidentified sand products immediately. As prescribed by regulators in countries that have recalled the products, if the sand is still in its packaging, place in a heavy-duty plastic bag, double tape it securely, label it clearly and store in a secure location out of the reach of children. If the sand has been used, clean up

sites where the product was used using wet cloths to avoid generating dust. Wear gloves and a mask. Double bag the sand, gloves, mask and cloths. Keep children and other people away from areas where the sand has been used until the area has been cleaned.

Ensuring access to safe, trustworthy products reflects the key message of World Consumer Rights Day (WCRD) 2026: "Safety must not be a privilege". Unsafe products threaten lives and undermine fundamental consumer rights, and children should never face preventable risks from toys or craft materials that are assumed to be safe.

Mohideen Abdul Kader
President
Consumers' Association of Penang