



FACT SHEET

This fact sheet provides information on the relevance of NICNAS Registration requirements to the soap making industry.

SOAPS

Soaps and other cosmetics and toiletries are made up of industrial chemicals; they are subject to certain requirements under the *Industrial Chemicals (Notification and Assessment) Act 1989* (the Act), including NICNAS Registration requirements.

These requirements apply if you:

- Manufacture chemicals (including soap) which are used in cosmetic products.
- Import packaged cosmetic products or toiletries for retail sale.
- Import chemicals which will be used in the formulation of cosmetic products.

SOAP MAKING

Soap making utilises a chemical reaction between a fat and an alkali to produce glycerol and soap. Animal or vegetable fat is reacted with an alkali, generally sodium or potassium hydroxide or carbonate, and when the hydrolysis reaction is complete the soap is processed by one of several different methods depending on whether it is being made traditionally or by industrial manufacture. The “cold-process” and “hot-process” methods of soap making both use the saponification reaction.

Making soap from products such as “soap bases”, “glycerin blocks” and “melt and pour bases” may not involve a chemical reaction because the saponification reaction has already occurred during the manufacture of the product. Soap-free cleansers, such as syndet bars, are generally made by mixing (or blending) the ingredients, without a chemical reaction.

NICNAS Registration

NICNAS Registration requirements apply to persons/companies importing and/or manufacturing relevant industrial chemicals or products containing relevant industrial chemicals.

If a soap making process involves a chemical reaction (please read the above description of soap making to determine if your soap making method involves a chemical reaction) it is regarded by NICNAS as the manufacture of chemicals.

All importers and/or manufacturers of relevant industrial chemicals for commercial purposes must register with NICNAS, regardless of the amount of relevant industrial

chemicals imported or manufactured in that registration year. A registration year runs from 1 September to 31 August in the following year.

There are three levels of registration. Your registration level and hence registration cost is based on the total value of relevant industrial chemicals imported and/or manufactured each year. Further details such as fees and charges can be found in the NICNAS Registration brochure.

If you import cosmetic products or chemicals used in formulating cosmetic products, the import value of the products should be included in assessing your NICNAS Registration Tier level. The import value is the customs value in Australian dollars, plus the duty paid, and the cost of insurance and freight.

The Act does not distinguish between imported chemicals by the way they are packaged or shipped. NICNAS Registration provisions cover chemicals imported in bulk and those imported as finished products.

If you manufacture any of the chemicals (including soap) used in formulating cosmetic products, then these manufactured chemicals, as industrial chemicals, should be included in your NICNAS Registration assessment. NICNAS Registration requirements apply whether these manufactured chemicals are on-sold or used to formulate cosmetic products within the same company.

For further information on NICNAS Registration obligations refer to NICNAS Registration available at www.nicnas.gov.au/Industry/Registration.asp.

Australian Inventory of Chemical Substances (AICS)

AICS is a key tool which lists chemicals available for use in Australia without notification and assessment by NICNAS. Some chemicals may only be available for specified / conditional use. It is important that you are aware of any conditions or restrictions that may apply to chemicals you import and/or manufacture or plan to export.

An industrial chemical is considered to be a new industrial chemical if it is not listed on AICS or its introduction is subject to a condition of use. By law, all new industrial chemicals must be notified and assessed by NICNAS before they can be imported or manufactured in Australia. If you introduce (that is, import or manufacture) a chemical or chemical product, you need to ensure the chemical, or all the ingredients in the product, are listed on the AICS and comply with the conditions of use where relevant.

AICS is composed of two sections: non-confidential and confidential section. To find out if a chemical is listed on the non-confidential section of AICS, you can search AICS online at www.nicnas.gov.au/Industry/AICS/Search.asp or request NICNAS to carry out the search for you. A service charge applies only to requests for NICNAS to search the non-confidential section.

For further information about notification and assessment requirements, please refer to the Handbook for Notifiers at: www.nicnas.gov.au/Publications/NICNAS_Handbook.asp

If you have any queries about assessment and NICNAS registration requirements for cosmetic products and toiletries, please contact NICNAS on 1800 638 528 or 02 8577 8800 or email to info@nicnas.gov.au.