

# WHAT IS AN INDUSTRIAL CHEMICAL?



Did you know that you are probably using industrial chemicals every day around your home? Detergents, cleaning agents and varnishes are all industrial chemicals, as are the chemicals used for photographic development and photocopying.

If asked to list some industrial chemicals, it's likely most of us would think of those found in factories or chemical plants like dyes, solvents, adhesives and plastics.

Not all chemicals are industrial chemicals, however. So, how can you find out whether a chemical is an industrial chemical?

**Industrial chemicals are defined not by how or where they are made, but how they are used. To find out whether a chemical is an industrial chemical, there are five questions you need to ask...**

**1.** Is the chemical used as an agricultural chemical, or is it part of an agricultural chemical product?

**Yes/No**

*Agricultural chemicals and products generally destroy or repel pests or plants. Herbicides, insecticides and fungicides are all examples of agricultural chemical products.*

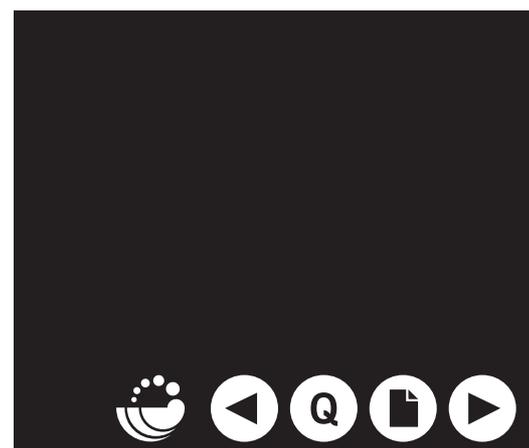
*So are insect repellents for use on humans, swimming pool disinfectants and household products for weed control.*

**2.** Is the chemical used as a veterinary chemical, or is it part of a veterinary chemical product?

**Yes/No**

*Veterinary chemicals and products are used to prevent, diagnose or treat diseases in animals. Animal medications for treating gastrointestinal worms, hormonal growth promotants and antibiotics for animals are all examples of veterinary chemical products.*

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**3.** Is the chemical used therapeutically, or is it an ingredient in goods for therapeutic use?

**Yes/No**

*Chemicals and goods for therapeutic use include prescription, non-prescription and complementary medicines.*

*Pregnancy testing products, contraceptive products and medical devices such as prosthetics or orthotics are also therapeutic goods.*

**4.** Is the chemical used as food for humans or animals, or does it form part of food for humans or animals?

**Yes/No**

*Some chemicals, for example food additives, are added to food because they have a function in the food such as preserving the food or adding flavour or colour. Other chemicals can assist in food preparation. Some chemicals may occur naturally in food or be present as a result of contamination.*

**5.** Does the chemical have any other use(s)?

**Yes/No**

*Chemicals may have many other uses, for example, they can be used in fuels, lubricants and antifreezes. Some chemicals are used to add colour (dyes), while others are used to remove colour (bleaches). Chemicals can be used as flame retardants or as insulators. Some are used in explosives and for analysis in laboratories.*

IF YOU ANSWERED 'YES' ONLY TO QUESTION 5 OR 'YES' TO QUESTION 5 IN ADDITION TO ANSWERING 'YES' TO ANY OR ALL OF THE OTHER QUESTIONS, THEN YOUR CHEMICAL IS AN INDUSTRIAL CHEMICAL.

*(In other words, a chemical is not an industrial chemical if its sole use is described in questions 1 to 4.)*

These are the chemicals that NICNAS, the National Industrial Chemicals Notification and Assessment Scheme, is interested in.

Sometimes a chemical may have more than one use. For example, the chemical ethylene oxide is used in the production of other chemicals (an industrial use, question 5) and is a fumigant in several agricultural chemical products. It is also used to sterilise medical equipment and is a food processing aid. Chemicals like ethylene oxide are still industrial chemicals, because of their industrial uses.

The chemical diazinon also has several uses. It is used to treat crops against infestation by pests, to treat sheep and cattle against infestation by insects and is also used to fumigate buildings. All of its uses are agricultural (question 1) or veterinary (question 2), so these uses mean it is not an industrial chemical.

In Australia, there are three other schemes that cover food, pharmaceuticals and agricultural and veterinary chemicals. If you would like to find out more about them, click on the following link: <http://www.nicnas.gov.au/australia/ARCA.htm>

If you want to find out more about industrial chemicals, you can contact NICNAS in the following ways:

Ph: 1800 638 528 Fax: (02) 8577 8888  
Write to: GPO Box 58 Sydney NSW 2001 Australia

Staff at NICNAS will be happy to respond to your query.

