



PRISM: Products and Hazards Deemed Serious Risk

Risk assessment of certain types of products and hazards (such as chemical hazards) is typically complex and can be time consuming. For some types of products such as Category III PPE (Cat III PPE) any failure, including breaches in relation to labelling, can generally be presumed to involve serious risk.

In certain, very limited cases it is therefore appropriate to assume that any non-compliance involves serious risk – these cases are described below. Note, however, that this should be seen as a rebuttable presumption, and in any given situation if the assessor is aware of particular factors that might indicate the risk to be less than serious, such factors can and should be taken into account.

Chemical risks

Limits on chemicals set out in legislation reflect the scientific consensus on exposure limits and routes. The risk level of a product may be treated as serious risk if the product contains a chemical substance that is either prohibited or at a level that exceeds a prescribed legal limit. The complexities involved in carrying out full and detailed chemical risk assessments are recognised, and treating these situations as serious risk is a pragmatic solution in lieu of a full assessment.

Category III PPE

Where a product which is categorised as Cat III PPE is found to be non-compliant for any reason, the risk level of the product may be treated as serious.

Products / hazards assessed by OPSS as serious risk

Products with hazards of a specific type that have been assessed by OPSS as presenting a serious risk need not be further risk assessed. It is of course important the assessor is clear that the product and hazard under consideration is of the type that has been risk assessed by OPSS.

The following product types and hazards have been assessed by OPSS as involving serious risk:

Angle grinder chainsaw discs and attachments

Angle grinders are not designed for use with chainsaw discs and attachments, as these tools lack the safety features required on electric chainsaws such as handle spacing, hand guards, chain catcher and chain brake, and operate at significantly higher speeds than chain saws.

A legally safe angle grinder which is fitted with a chainsaw disc or chainsaw attachment presents a **serious risk**. This is primarily because:

- the risk of the chainsaw attachment digging in and causing a kickback is increased based on the typical cutting motion used with these attachments, particularly in wood sculpting
- the safety features on an angle grinder are unlikely to be effective in protecting the operator (and any bystanders) from contact with the chain in the event of kickback (especially if the chain were to derail or break)

[Read the OPSS product safety alert for angle grinder chainsaw disc attachments](#)

Risk evaluating products deemed serious risk

The assessor should still gather sufficient information to undertake an informed risk evaluation. This will consider the potential severity of harm, product prevalence, the subjects at risk and any people at increased risk, any other hazards identified in the product and any other matters that have come to the attention of the assessor as part of their assessment. This information will then be used to inform an appropriate risk management plan that is transparent about the fact the product has been labelled serious risk by default. Factors considered in the risk evaluation that have shaped and defined the management plan should be highlighted.

The assessor is encouraged to carry out a risk assessment where matters are known that can inform the severity of harm and the probability of the harm occurring. However, this assessment should not delay taking necessary corrective action if it is believed harm may occur while a full and complete risk assessment is being developed.

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