



Press Information

Hazardous substances in sports mats: The new ArmaSport mats are produced without harmful plasticizers

ArmaSport now offers sports mats without phthalate plasticizers

Bad news for physiotherapy centres: many of the sports mats available on the market contain considerable amounts of the harmful plasticizers known as phthalates. These substances are absorbed into the body through skin contact and are suspected of impairing human fertility. Whilst such substances are banned in children's toys, as yet no conditions are imposed on the use of plasticizers in sports mats. ArmaSport is now bringing out a new generation of sports mats which are manufactured without phthalate plasticizers and are just as flexible and durable as the well-known ArmaSport mats. The production changeover and introduction of the new mats will be phased in gradually. The new mats will be presented for the first time at the Medica.

Misgivings concerning the use of phthalate plasticizers are growing: in July this year, the EU Commission placed a complete ban on the use of the plasticizers DEHP, DBP and BBP in toys. The phthalates DEHP, DBP and BBP present a health risk to human beings and their ecotoxicological potential is high. They are absorbed into the human body through skin contact and can impair fertility. They are also suspected of harming babies in the womb. Furthermore, DBP and BBP are highly toxic for aquatic organisms and BBP can have long-term damaging effects in lakes and rivers. Although the health risk presented by the phthalate plasticizers DINP, DIDP and DNOP has not yet been scientifically proven, these substances have also been banned in baby's and child's toys which small children could put into their mouths. However, they are not subject to labelling requirements.

Phthalates are used in numerous products as plasticizers for plastics. In Germany alone, some 250,000 tonnes of DEHP, the most common and also the most controversial plasticizer, are used every year. As early as January 2004, the magazine "Öko-Test" pointed out that a leading manufacturer's gymnastics mat contained large amounts of harmful phthalate plasticizers. A follow-up test in January 2005 produced similar results. In October 2005, further tests by the *Deutsches Institut für Kautschuktechnologie* (German institute for rubber technology) in Hanover confirmed the fears: here too considerable amounts of harmful phthalate plasticizers which are subject to labelling requirements were found in the sports mats tested.

The new generation of ArmaSport mats prove that there is an alternative. In the manufacture of its new mats, Armacell does not use phthalate plasticizers, choosing instead a completely harmless substance which was developed especially for use in children's toys, food packaging and medical products. The change in the recipe does not have any impact on the physical properties of the mat: it is just as flexible, shock-absorbing, slip-resistant and durable its predecessors. When the ArmaSport mats were developed, health aspects had the highest priority. All ArmaSport mats have been tested according to DIN EN 12503 and thus fulfil the particular demands made on the shock absorption properties when used in schools, sports facilities and competitions. ArmaSport mats do not contain latex and are, therefore, suitable for those suffering from allergies or latex sensitization.

Armacell is the world's leading manufacturer of flexible technical insulation materials with a consolidated annual turnover of around € 300 million (2004). The group has 19 factories in 12 countries including China, Australia, North and South America, and is headquartered in Münster, Germany. The company's approximately 2,200 employees produce not only the ArmaSport range, but also Armaflex, the leading brand in the field of flexible technical insulation; thermoplastic insulation materials; jacket and covering systems for pipe insulation and special foams for industrial applications.

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