

Nickel Compounds Media FAQ

Q: Why did the Nickel Institute challenge the European Commission's decision to classify nickel compounds?

A: The Nickel Institute challenged the methodology for the European Commission's classification of around 100 nickel compounds. The case was about procedure not science.

Q: What is read-across?

A: Read-across is a methodology for taking existing hazard information from (data-rich) source substances and extrapolating them to a data-poor substance. When applied appropriately following international standards such as OECD, read-across is a very useful tool as it minimises animal testing.

Q: How was read-across used improperly to classify nickel compounds?

A: Water solubility alone was chosen as the basis for the read-across. In order for the read-across to be scientifically robust, biological validation testing is required as set out in accepted international guidance on read-across. The critical validation step was not performed.

Q: What are the Nickel Institute's next steps?

A: Currently, the Nickel Institute does not foresee taking any further legal actions in this case. The Nickel Institute will continue its own scientific research programme, which has been underway for over 25 years. It will continue to advocate for sound science and proper procedures as the basis for chemical regulation.

Q: What are nickel compounds used for?

A: Nickel compounds are chemicals, used in a variety of industrial processes to create many essential products and processes that are beneficial to our way of life. These include anti-corrosion electroplating for cars and airplanes, to colour ceramics, in batteries and as catalysts. Nickel compounds, through new and innovative applications, are advancing green technologies such as solar panels, fuel cells and hybrid cars.

Q: Is there a difference between nickel metal and nickel compounds?

A: Yes, they are different. Nickel is a metal. It comes from nickel oxide or sulphide ores which are mined. Nickel compounds are chemicals which account for about 5% of annual refined nickel production.

Q: Do nickel compounds pose a public health threat?

A: As the nickel compounds are used in industrial processes under controlled conditions, the public is not exposed to them.

Q: Are workers who are exposed to nickel compounds at risk?

A: Nickel Institute member companies are committed to worker safety and environmental protection. The Nickel Institute's 'Safe Use of Nickel in the Workplace' handbook can be found at <http://www.nickelinstitute.org/MediaCentre/Publications/SafeUseOfNickel.aspx>.

Q: Does nickel metal pose a public health threat?

A: Nickel metal is used in a wide variety of materials and products in everyday life and is not a threat to public health. It is well-known that an estimated 10% (5-15% in women and 0.5-6% in men) of the population may have skin sensitivity to nickel if there is prolonged skin contact. In the EU, there is legislation to protect consumers from direct and prolonged contact with items which release nickel above a specific release rate, for example in jewellery. Information on contact dermatitis is available on our website.