



EBAY (UK) LIMITED
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JR Leslie Hamilton
HM Coroner
County Durham and Darlington
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Bishop Auckland
County Durham
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sent by email to hmcoroner@durham.gov.uk

8 January 2021

Dear Mr Hamilton

Re Jason Thompson (deceased) – Sodium Nitrite

I refer to your Regulation 28 Report dated 20 November 2020, and to your letter dated 3 December 2020 in which you enclosed the response of Metalchem Limited regarding the death of Mr Jason Thompson.

May I first extend condolences on behalf of eBay to Mr Thompson's relatives. This is indeed a very tragic case.

By way of background, in 2019 eBay took the voluntary decision to prohibit globally the sale of sodium nitrite as a chemical, after receiving a report of potential use of the substance for suicide attempts. In addition to updating our prohibited items policy, eBay updated its filters, which are used to help detect and prevent the listing for sale of this chemical.

To provide some context, eBay has approximately 1.6 billion listings live at any one time. It therefore relies on utilising a combination of technology and live reporting from both monitoring authorities and its users to help keep the marketplace as safe as practicable. Our expert internal safety teams work in cooperation with various regulators across the world and in the UK, including Westminster Trading Standards as our Prime Authority.

After we had received your first letter, our security team identified the listing from which Mr. Thompson purchased the sodium nitrite. The listing had already ended. In addition, the security team performed a sweep which revealed that no similar listings were found on our platform.

The listing was analysed in order to improve block filter algorithms. Since then, our security team did not find any further listings of sodium nitrite. As you have seen, this was also the finding of Metalchem Ltd in their letter to you dated 27 November 2020.

The nature of eBay means sellers create their own listing content. Therefore, although the filter algorithm technology is highly effective, it is sometimes possible for unscrupulous or unaware sellers to circumvent our policies and filters by utilising terminology that is not captured by the current filter rules. That is why we continuously update our filters to make sure they remain as effective as possible.

eBay also relies on a notice and takedown regime, where we are supported by members of the public who can flag individual listings or sellers that are breaching policy, as well as receiving intelligence from regulators such as Trading Standards and the Home Office.



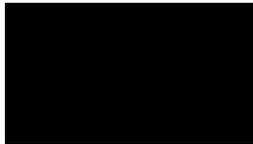
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It is worth clarifying that sodium nitrite does occur as a legal ingredient in other products, such as meat curing salts. These were highlighted in recent press articles as being available on eBay. The amount of sodium nitrite in such products, at about 6%, is a small proportion of the overall product compared to the amount of sodium chloride, which is itself injurious to health if consumed in large quantities. Furthermore, the emetic effects of sodium chloride means that ingesting large amounts of curing salts is likely to make an individual vomit. Therefore, after taking advice, we have concluded that curing salts can continue to be sold on the site.

However, please be assured that we will continue to work with the relevant authorities to keep abreast of developments and ensure that our policy prohibiting the sale of sodium nitrite as a chemical will continue to be enforced rigorously. As you will be aware, sodium nitrite in its pure form is still available for sale on the internet via other websites and platforms. We would therefore support stricter regulations restricting the online sale of sodium nitrite as a chemical in its pure form via the internet in order to prevent further such tragic cases in the future.

I am also copying this letter to the Secretary of State for Health.

Yours sincerely



Director
eBay (UK) Limited