

## **Beryllium danger**

I wish to draw your attention to an article that appeared in the radio amateur journal "QST" July 1978, which warns of the extremely toxic nature of the substance Beryllium Oxide.

As well as those applications mentioned in the article, beryllium oxide is to be found in commonly used RF power transistors (e.g. 2N5590, 2N6084, B40-12 etc). Some mounting kits for transistors also use beryllium oxide washers for improved conductivity. I am certain that there are many persons handling such items who are quite unaware of the dangers involved. Unfortunately the use of beryllium oxide (BeO) seems to be widespread.

Recently I came across an item in the 1979 Dick Smith catalog. This warned that one of their products, Heat Transfer Compound, happened to contain BeO. If this is in fact so, and if other brands of heatsink compound also contain BeO, it would appear that a very real health hazard exists to any persons involved with the maintenance or construction of electronic equipment. As you are no doubt aware, heat-sink compound being in the form of a grease, is a rather messy substance to use, and even if care is taken it is difficult to keep from coming into physical contact with it. This could result in traces of it being taken internally, with possible disastrous consequences.

Up till now, I have seen four different brands of heatsink compound available on the market — one contains BeO, the others may or may not, but it is significant to note that none of these has so

much as a word of warning labelled on it. I find this type of situation deplorable, especially when one considers that other products on the market, far less toxic than BeO, have warning labels on them.

I hope that you will be able to pass this information on to your readers so that they will be aware of the dangers in handling beryllium oxide. I would suggest that any project you may publish which makes use of this substance in any form also contain a suitable warning.

E. J. Smeda VK3YNM  
Eltham, Victoria.