



HSIA

halogenated
solvents
industry
alliance, inc.

SAFE USE AND HANDLING OF METHYLENE CHLORIDE-BASED PAINT STRIPPERS

Methylene chloride is an essential ingredient for removing paint and varnish and refinishing furniture. Methylene chloride-based paint strippers extend the life of coated materials and aid in their reuse and recycling.

SAFETY

HSIA's members are committed to the safe and effective use of methylene chloride-based paint strippers and recommend that all users take appropriate safety precautions. Both household and industrial products containing methylene chloride should always be used in accordance with manufacturers' labels.

The following actions are strongly recommended:

- Always wear protective gloves, protective clothing, and eye and face protection to avoid contact with skin, eyes, and clothing;
- Do not breathe mist, vapors, or spray;
- Ventilate closed spaces before entering them and make sure that the solvent vapor concentrations do not exceed limits established by OSHA;
- Do not eat, drink, or smoke when using the product;
- Always consult the manufacturer's safety data sheet and label instructions before using and do not handle until all safety precautions have been read and understood;
- Use respiratory protection when vapor concentrations may exceed OSHA limits, and pay particular attention to working in a closed environment;
- Store unused product in a cool, dry, and well ventilated area;
- Properly dispose of any unused material and do not release into drains, water, or groundwater;
- Properly train personnel in the safe handling, storage and disposal of methylene chloride and the appropriate safety procedures; and
- Do not use in areas where there is likely to be inadequate ventilation (e.g., bathrooms, basements, any confined area, etc.)

LABELING

All household products containing methylene chloride must be labeled in accordance with the Federal Hazardous Substances Act. The Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) issued a Statement of Enforcement Policy in 1987 that specifies such cautionary labeling to protect against chronic hazard.

HSIA has petitioned the CPSC to strengthen this language so that it addresses acute as well as chronic hazard. The label language submitted by HSIA clearly states that the product is not to be used for stripping bathtubs. CPSC staff approved the label language submitted by HSIA and the Commission has indicated that it will be issuing a revised Statement of Enforcement Policy that will reflect the stronger language. Product manufacturers are currently adopting the new labels.

Enhanced labeling and use limitations appropriately mitigate risk and avoid consumer exposure to less effective alternatives that present their own health and safety concerns, and promote consumer choice.

ALTERNATIVES

Proposed alternatives to methylene chloride-based paint strippers have proven to be ineffective at removing many coatings. In addition, they may pose workplace and environmental hazards due to high flammability and VOC levels. Methylene chloride is not flammable and does not contribute to smog formation.

Proposed alternatives also add substantial time for application (3-4 hours vs. 5-15 minutes) with greater opportunity for user exposure and environmental releases.

A study of alternatives completed this year at UMass Lowell (funded by an EPA grant) demonstrated that commercially available alternatives are considerably less effective and have low consumer acceptance.

EXISTING REGULATION WORKS

In 1997, OSHA adopted a comprehensive standard governing all aspects of methylene chloride use in the workplace. As described above, the CPSC is strengthening the labeling it requires to protect consumer health and safety. EPA's national emission standard (NESHAP) for paint stripping requires sources to adopt management practices to reduce inhalation exposure from paint strippers, to reduce methylene chloride evaporation, and to follow safe practices for proper storage and disposal.

SUPPORT FOR THE FRANK R. LAUTENBERG ACT

HSIA supports the Frank R. Lautenberg Chemical Safety for the 21st Century Act recently passed by Congress and signed into law.