

Methylene Chloride and Paint Strippers: Health and Safety Recommendations for Consumers

This health and safety fact sheet summarizes existing hazard communication materials from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH). The Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) consulted with these federal organizations and updated its labeling guidelines for paint strippers containing methylene chloride. We provide links to the health and safety websites and requirements from federal and state organizations:

- On March 21, 2018, CPSC updated its labeling guidance to emphasize acute health risks. The beginning of the recommended front panel label reads: “WARNING Contains Methylene Chloride. INHALATION OF VAPOR CAN KILL YOU. DO NOT USE IN ENCLOSED AREAS such as bathrooms, basements, or closets. SYMPTOMS MAY NOT BE NOTICEABLE.”
- Effective after November 22, 2019, EPA’s regulation on methylene chloride for consumer paint and coating removal prohibits all retailers, including e-commerce retailers, from distributing into commerce any products containing methylene chloride for paint and coating removal.
- Consumer products containing methylene chloride that were purchased before November 22, 2019, and commercial paint stripping products containing methylene chloride present an ongoing potential source of exposure to consumers.

What should consumers do if they have medical concerns?

Homeowners, building occupants, and workers, in severe cases, have died following application of paint strippers containing methylene chloride. You may not notice initial non-lethal symptoms, which can occur quickly. Leave the area and seek immediate medical attention if you experience dizziness, headache, lack of coordination, breathing problems, or other adverse health effects. If these symptoms occur, consumers should do the following:

- Consumers should file an online Consumer Product Incident Report of injury with the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission on the [SaferProducts.gov](https://www.saferproducts.gov) website, if paint stripping products are suspected to be the source of a health problem.
- Contact local or state consumer protection office or contractors’ licensing board if your concerns are not resolved with the contractor and/or product manufacturer.

What should consumers consider if they plan to use paint strippers containing methylene chloride?

To prevent potentially serious health effects, consumers should not use methylene chloride for paint and coating removal. Because EPA determined that methylene chloride in paint and coating removal presents an unreasonable risk to consumers, EPA prohibits the distribution of methylene chloride paint strippers to and by retailers (after November 22, 2019). A “retailer” is defined as a person who

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distributes in commerce or makes available a chemical substance or mixture to consumer end users, including e-commerce Internet sales or distribution.

CPSC recommends consumers do not use commercial or consumer paint stripping products containing methylene chloride purchased before November 22, 2019.

OSHA requires workers to follow specific work practice standards to reduce their exposure to methylene chloride, including wearing air-supplied respiratory protection.

To protect yourself, your family, or those in your care, take the following steps:

- Consumers should never use methylene chloride-containing products in enclosed spaces, such as bathrooms. These products should not be used around children.
- Become informed of potential health effects and safe handling procedures for chemicals and products used around you and your family.
- Consider hiring a trained professional paint stripper.

What should consumers consider if they plan to hire a professional paint stripper?

Commercial use of paint stripping products containing methylene chloride is not prohibited. Trained workers who follow OSHA standards for methylene chloride continue to use commercial paint-stripping products. Effective communication between trained workers and homeowners/building occupants is essential.

- ✓ Ask your contractor what work practice controls they will use to reduce exposure. For example:
 - Ensure that the homeowners/building occupants are isolated from the work area and that only trained workers wearing appropriate protective equipment can access the work area during and after application.
 - Use local exhaust ventilation to reduce levels of methylene chloride during and after application. Using bathroom fans or opening the windows does not provide adequate ventilation.
 - Minimize or avoid spraying.
 - Ensure that the amount of product used is limited to only what is needed, the required personal protective equipment is used, and general housekeeping procedures are followed.
- ✓ Learn about the product being used in your building.
 - Obtain copies of product literature and safety data sheets.
 - Become informed of potential health effects and safe handling procedures for chemicals and products being used in homes by contractors.
- ✓ Do your research when selecting a contractor:
 - Verify your contractor is trained to use the product safely.
 - Verify the contractor's insurance and licenses, and check their references.

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Where can I find more important health and safety information and guidance?

Federal Agency Websites and Resources

[EPA: Risk Management for Methylene Chloride](#)

[EPA: Regulation of Paint and Coating Removal for Consumer Use: Methylene Chloride](#)

[EPA: Small Entity Compliance Guidance for the Regulation of Methylene Chloride: Paint and Coating Removal for Consumer Use](#)

[CPSC: Labeling of Certain Household Products Containing Methylene Chloride: Supplemental Guidance](#)

[OSHA: Occupational Safety and Health Standards: Methylene Chloride](#)

[OSHA NIOSH Hazard Alert: Methylene Chloride Hazards for Bathtub Refinishers](#)

[OSHA Fatal Facts: Lethal Exposure to Methylene Chloride during Bathtub Refinishing](#)

[CDC: Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report- Fatal Exposure to Methylene Chloride among Bathtub Refinishers- US, 2000-2011](#)

[NIOSH: Methylene Chloride](#)

State Agency Website and Resources

[California Department of Public Health: Preventing Worker Deaths from Paint Strippers Containing Methylene Chloride](#)

[California Department of Public Health: Methylene Chloride is Dangerous. There are Safer Alternatives](#)

[UMASS Lowell-Toxics Use Reduction Institute-Paint and Coating Removal](#)

[Washington State Department of Labor and Industries: Bathtub Refinisher Deaths from Methylene Chloride](#)

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