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Methylene chloride first choice for paint stripping applications

The European Commission is considering the need for legislation on the use of methylene chloride as a paint stripper. An ECSA survey of paint stripping users and formulators reveals they want paint stripper that is:

- Fast acting-paint removal in 1-3 hours
- Effective-stripping multiple layers and easy to use in difficult access areas
- Low odour
- Low cost
- **Safe-no health risks** or flammability concerns
- Causes no substrate damage

Methylene chloride satisfies all these requirements and is used extensively for paint stripping because of its excellent and rapid performance, without flammability or solvent abuse issues.

Data shows that methylene chloride can be used without any health risks as long as simple safety measures are followed.

ECSA notes that alternatives to methylene chloride paint strippers all have disadvantages. The stripping rate is at least 12 times slower, with application times of up to 48 hours. Co-solvents added to accelerate the stripping effect are open to volatile solvent abuse, they also make the paint stripper potentially flammable, or increase the rate at which substances can penetrate the skin. Use of physical processes, such as sanding or hot air guns, is not without risks. Apart from being time-consuming, they create dust and fumes, which are a nuisance and may carry toxic ingredients, such as lead.

ECSA says there are other systems that could substitute methylene chloride paint strippers, but it is not clear if the alternative routes are less hazardous, or provide a significantly lower risk in use by the consumer.

Perchloroethylene and Methylene Chloride: Change of R 40 risk phrase

New wording is required for the labelling of R40 substances, which includes methylene chloride and perchloroethylene. It is important to note that the EU classification remains unchanged and the new labelling will not affect any condition of use of the solvents. ECSA notes that the solvents can both continue to be used safely by following the recommended practices and complying with appropriate local legislation on workplace safety.

The wording of the risk phrase R 40 "Possible risks of irreversible effects" has been changed to "Limited evidence of a carcinogenic effect". The change must appear in the Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) and on packaging labels. For solvents, the directive had to be transposed into the legislation of EU Member states and applied by July 30, 2002. For preparations containing at least 1% by weight of the solvent the change should be applied by January 1, 2003.

The decision relates to effects observed on laboratory animals exposed to relatively high doses of the solvent. ECSA-funded studies that have shown that

the mechanisms observed in animals are not applicable to humans. For more information, contact suppliers or consult the website:

<http://www.eurochlor.org/chlorsolvents/issues/issues.htm>.

Akzo Nobel resigns from ECSA

As a result of its decision to stop manufacturing chlorine, methylene chloride and chloroform at its Delfzijl plant in the Netherlands in 2004, Akzo Nobel will resign from ECSA on 1 January 2004. The Delfzijl facility was built in 1970 and had been operating at a loss for several years.

The move will leave ECSA with seven member companies:

	Methylene Chloride	Trichloro-ethylene	Perchloro-ethylene
Aragonesas	x		
Atofina	x	x	x
Dow Europe	x	x	x
Ercros	x		x
Ineos Chlor	x	x	x
LII Europe	x		
Solvay	x	x	x