

Partial ban for paint strippers containing dichloromethane proposed

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The European Commission has proposed today to restrict the sale and use of paint strippers containing dichloromethane. Such paint removers, are used in industry and are also sold in "Do-It-Yourself" stores accessible to everybody. Dichloromethane vapour is toxic to the central nervous system and the Commission's proposal follows concerns of some experts that a number of accidents and fatalities which have occurred in recent years in the EU have been linked to use of the substance. The Commission therefore proposes to ban the sale of such paint strippers to the general public and professional users. However, taking account of other expert opinion that this substance may be safely used by professionals if adequate precautions are taken, Member States may permit their purchase and use by licensed professionals who have received appropriate training. For industrial activities, their use will be permitted under strictly controlled conditions. The formal adoption by the European Parliament and the Council is expected by the end of the year.

Commission Vice-President Günter Verheugen, responsible for enterprise and industry policy, said: "Our proposal will achieve a high level of protection of human health and will provide an important measure of added safety for consumers and workers".

Risks from dichloromethane in paint strippers have been assessed in several studies conducted by the Commission. They concluded that measures to reduce the risk connected to the use of dichloromethane are necessary throughout the EU.

Between 1989 and 2007, a significant number of fatalities and accidents have been registered in the EU from the use of such paint strippers caused by inadequate ventilation and inappropriate personal protective equipment.

Several EU Member States have already put in place national measures to control the risks of dichloromethane in paint strippers and Germany has recently notified restriction measures to the Commission.

The Commission proposal aims:

- to ban the use by **consumers**, who are least aware of the dangers of dichloromethane and who have least access to protective equipment;
- to ban in general the use by **professionals operating outside industrial premises**, but Member States can opt to allow further use by professionals with adequate training and license to operate;
- to **increase protection of workers** during industrial use of such paint strippers through compulsory use of protective equipment (gloves and masks) as well as the modification of the operational strip tanks and adequate ventilation at the workplace;
- to **avoid further divergent actions by Member States** which create obstacles to the internal market without benefit for the protection of all European citizens.

The Commission has consulted all relevant stakeholders in the preparation of the proposal. The measures have been evaluated in a Commission impact assessment and were found to be most effective and proportionate compared to other available options.

For further information:

http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/chemicals/legislation/markrestr/index_en.htm