

# HAZARD ALERT

CPWR  
THE CENTER FOR CONSTRUCTION  
RESEARCH AND TRAINING

# STRIPPING PAINT

RISK OF EXPOSURE TO METHYLENE CHLORIDE  
CAN BE DEADLY

HF&C  
HAYLOR, FREYER & COON™  
Insuring All You Value

## Are you in danger?

If you use a liquid stripper or solvent to remove paint or refinish bathtubs, the answer may be **YES**.

Many strippers and solvents contain **methylene chloride (MeCl)**. **Inhaling this chemical can kill you within minutes.**

That's what happened to one worker while stripping paint from a church's baptismal font in a tight, unventilated space without a respirator and adequate protective clothing.

## Protect Yourself

If a stripper or solvent contains methylene chloride:

- ▶ **Do not work alone**
- ▶ **Make sure the work area is properly ventilated**
- ▶ **Wear appropriate PPE**
- ▶ **Get training**
- ▶ **Show your employer this card** – OSHA requires employers to follow its Methylene Chloride standard (29 CFR 1910.1052)

## What are the long-term health effects?

If MeCl doesn't kill you, breathing it or absorbing it through your skin can have serious, life-threatening health effects including:

- ▶ **Cancer**
- ▶ **Brain and nervous system damage**
- ▶ **Heart problems for those with pre-existing heart disease**
- ▶ **Sexual dysfunction and fertility problems**

If you have stripped paint or refinished a bathtub and...

- ▶ **Had a headache;**
- ▶ **Felt sick to your stomach;**
- ▶ **Had irritated eyes, nose, throat;**
- ▶ **Had a skin irritation or a burn; and/or**
- ▶ **Felt dizzy or sleepy**

... then you may have already felt the effects of MeCl.

## When Removing Paint:



PHOTO BY AP/WIDEWORLD



Full Facepiece Supplied-Air Respirator (SAR) with an auxiliary Escape Bottle

## 1 Check the Label

If the product's label or safety data sheet lists "methylene chloride," "dichloromethane," or "methylene dichloride," show your employer this card. **Your employer is required to train you** on how to work safely with toxic chemicals.

## 2 Use Protective Gear

If methylene chloride must be used, your employer is required to provide you with personal protective equipment (PPE):

- ▶ **Gloves made of polyethylene vinyl alcohol (PVA) or ethylene vinyl alcohol (EVA)**
- ▶ **Face shields or chemical safety goggles**
- ▶ **NIOSH-certified supplied-air respirators**
- ▶ **MeCl-resistant aprons, sleeves, and boots or shoe covers**

## 3 Ask for safer products

Less toxic strippers and solvents that have been found to "work just as well (and cost about the same) as MeCl-based strippers" are available.<sup>1,2</sup>

- ▶ **Crown Paint Strip Next**
- ▶ **Hi-Speed Ready-Strip**
- ▶ **Mötsenböcker's Lift Off Paint and Varnish Remover**
- ▶ **Piranha NexStrip Pro**
- ▶ **Safest Stripper™ Paint and Varnish Remover**
- ▶ **Smart Strip**
- ▶ **ZipStrip Premium Green Paint & Finish Remover**

\*CPWR does not endorse any specific equipment or product.

<sup>1</sup>CDPH Occupational Health Hazard Alert: <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/hesis/Documents/MethyleneChlorideAlert.pdf>

<sup>2</sup>Guide to Choosing Paint Stripping Products: Safety Considerations: <http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/hesis/Documents/Paint-Removal-Methods.pdf>

## Learn more about methylene chloride:

- ▶ Watch the video "Toxic Paint Removers: Safer Alternatives" and find other resources at <http://tinyurl.com/MeChloride>
- ▶ Review OSHA's methylene chloride resources at [www.osha.gov/SLTC/methylenechloride](http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/methylenechloride)

**If you think you are in danger:**

Contact your supervisor.  
Contact your union.

Call OSHA

**1-800-321-6742**

**Find out more about construction hazards.**

To receive copies of this Hazard Alert and cards on other topics call **301-578-8500**

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COVER PHOTO: Bottom of a paint tank where a worker died from inhaling methylene chloride vapors

PHOTO COURTESY OF: CALIFORNIA FATALITY ASSESSMENT AND CONTROL EVALUATION PROGRAM REPORT #11CA009

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