



Dissolve Solvent Woes With These Safety Tips

Solvents are often used to dissolve grease, oils and paints, or to thin or mix pigments, paints, glues, pesticides and epoxy resins. You can be exposed to solvents in the workplace if you breathe them, get them on your skin or swallow them. Small exposures over a long period of time can harm you; a single large exposure can kill you.

According to The Center to Protect Worker's Rights, Silver Spring, MD, here's what you can do to protect yourself:

- Read the labels and material safety data sheet for each solvent you use.
- Replace solvents when you can. For example, with water-based paints you don't need to use thinners or cleaners.
- Avoid contact with your skin. Don't use solvents to wash paint off your hands, and wear gloves when you clean paintbrushes.
- Try not to breathe solvents. Use the smallest container you can, and keep lids on paint or glue cans or degreasing units when not in use. Place rags with solvents on them in proper containers.
- Wash your hands before you smoke, eat or drink, and don't smoke, eat or drink where solvents are used. You could inadvertently swallow solvents.

Make sure you have plenty of fresh air. You can't always smell solvents. If working indoors, use an exhaust fan to pull vapors away from you. Ideally, use one fan to pull vapors outdoors and a second fan to pull fresh air into the room.

*Copyright 2003 * National Safety Council * All Rights Reserved. Reviewed 5/05.*