HAZARD ALERT

STRIPPING PAINT
RISK OF EXPOSURE TO METHYLENE CHLORIDE CAN BE DEADLY

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)

When Removing Paint:

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:1,2
   - 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.

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.

Learn more about methylene chloride:
- Watch the video “Toxic Paint Removers: Safer Alternatives” and find other resources at [http://tinyurl.com/MeChloride](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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