



Safe DIY Paint Stripping

In recent years the consumer has become more demanding in terms of the environment and their family's well-being, which has been reflected in a wide range of areas such as the growth of low odour paints & varnishes, natural products, organic foods, fair trade products, etc. etc.

With regard to DIY, one of the most dangerous DIY jobs is stripping off old paintwork/varnishes etc. in and around the home. This is due to the fact that the traditional hazardous paint strippers contain an ingredient called methylene chloride, or sometimes called dichloromethane (DCM). This ingredient causes dizziness, nausea, and even death in severe cases. Look at the back of any such DCM can and you will see the words "R40 Risk of Irreversible Effects".

Classified as a Class 3 Carcinogen, DCM evaporates quickly and is easily inhaled. It can also cause problems for people with heart, lung or blood diseases. Prolonged high exposure can cause liver & kidney damage. Now, the EU is seeking to restrict sale of DCM products, in particular to the consumer, which was finalised in February 2008.



So how do you strip paint and stay safe?

- 1** Use a non-DCM paint stripper or water-based product, such as Home Strip® from Eco Solutions Limited www.ecosolutions.co.uk. Take care to read label information carefully, if not using Home Strip®. Some non-DCM products contain N-methyl Pyrrolidone (NMP) which is dangerous for pregnant women.
- 2** If using a mechanical system for stripping (sanding or heatgun), always wear the appropriate mask to prevent inhaling fumes and dust.
- 3** Safely dispose of paint waste immediately, to avoid contaminating other areas.
- 4** Remember that lead-based paints are normally present in properties over 40 years old, so beware as this type of paint is particularly dangerous to young children. Using a water-based paint stripper such as Home Strip® from Eco Solutions Limited www.ecosolutions.co.uk will eliminate exposure to lead. NEVER sand painted surfaces which you suspect may contain lead based paint.
- 5** Before starting the job, be prepared, and use gloves and mask. Work in a well ventilated area, and have the product company's technical or customer care line number handy, in case you need to contact them for advice.

From the ROSPA website www.rospa.com (Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents) there is information on admissions to hospital of at least one per day where accident victims have been using paint stripper or paint thinners.

