Working Safely With Solvents Stats and Facts



FACTS

1. Solvents may enter the body through inhalation or through the skin.
2. Solvent waste must be separated from other waste and in separate solvent waste streams.
3. A major risk of solvent use is its volatility (low boiling point) causing flammable or toxic vapour.
4. The exposure limits are the maximum amount you may legally be exposed to in an 8-hour period (long-term limit), or in a 15-minute period (short-term limit).
5. Solvent vapours can be inhaled or absorbed through the skin, passing into the blood stream.
6. Contaminated food or hands can also lead to solvents being swallowed.
7. Short term exposure to solvents can irritate eyes, lungs and skin and may cause headaches, nausea, dizziness and light-headedness.
8. Chronic effects can include dermatitis, toxicity to the nervous system, reproductive damage, liver and kidney damage, respiratory impairment and cancer.
9. Exposure to high concentrations of solvent vapours can result in loss of consciousness or may be fatal.
10. Solvents can be highly volatile and may explode or catch fire if stored or handled incorrectly.

STATS

- 83 people died from methylene chloride exposure.
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- More than 50 people have died in the U.S. from accidental exposure to methylene chloride.
- A Center analysis identified at least 56 accidental exposure deaths linked to methylene chloride.
- The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) warns of the hazards of exposure to chemicals in the workplace. The federal agency estimates that 9.8 million workers may face such exposure in the United States. There are a wide variety of potential chemical injuries, including those from exposure to solvents, asbestos, latex rubber and gasoline.
- In 2017, 41 U.S. workers died on the job after a single episode of inhaling chemicals and chemical products.