

TOOLBOX TALK #6

BATHTUB REFINISHER DIES FROM METHYLENE CHLORIDE EXPOSURE

A 43-year-old bathtub refinisher, working alone in a small apartment bathroom, died from exposure to methylene chloride. The worker had been using a methylene chloride-containing paint remover. The bathroom had a small, open window but no mechanical ventilation. The victim was not wearing respiratory protection. The business owner reported that he personally trained the victim, and had established safety rules that were to be followed. He reported that he told the victim to always use gloves, goggles and a respirator, and to have good ventilation. However, he did not have a written Injury and Illness Prevention Program.



To Prevent Future Occurrences:

- *Use a safer paint removal product such as those containing benzyl alcohol, dimethylglutarate or dimethyl adipate. Avoid using products that contain methylene chloride or n-methyl pyrrolidone. Methylene chloride enters the body when inhaled and can be absorbed through unprotected skin. It can immediately irritate the eyes, nose and throat. Direct contact can cause severe burns to the skin and eyes. Even small exposures are harmful over time as they can damage the liver, kidneys and nerves, and can cause cancer.*
- *If a methylene chloride-containing paint remover is used, it should be applied only in a well-ventilated space, using an airline respirator and polyvinyl alcohol or Silvershield gloves. To reduce the buildup of toxic vapors, a continuous flow of clean air to the work area is needed, and a protective respirator must be worn.*