



Solvents are chemicals used to thin or dissolve paint, grease, epoxies, adhesives, and coatings, and can be hazardous to your health when breathed in, get on your skin, or swallowed. Some common solvents are: 1-bromopropane, acetone, benzene, denatured alcohols, methyl ethyl ketone (MEK), n-hexane, perchlorethylene, turpentine, mineral spirits, toluene, trichloroethylene, and xylene.

Mary's Story

Mary was using a paint thinner to clean brushes that had been used to apply a wood coating. She was using her bare hands to rub it into the bristles, and then rinsing the brushes in the bucket that had been used to clean other tools. The next day she noticed that her hands were red, dry, and cracked.

- ✘ What caused this incident?
- ✘ How could this have been prevented?
- ✘ Have you known or heard of anyone who was injured or made sick from solvent exposure? If so, what happened?

Remember This

Ask your employer or supervisor if the product you are using contains a solvent that could harm you. Check the product label or the Safety Data Sheet (SDS).

Ask your employer for training. OSHA requires employers to train employees using hazardous chemicals and to provide appropriate protective equipment, including:

- Chemical-resistant gloves.
- Eye protection.
- A NIOSH-approved respirator with the correct, color-coded cartridge for the chemical.

Protect your skin by wearing long sleeves.

Wash your skin immediately with soap and water, if the chemical gets on your skin. **Do not** wash your hands with a solvent, even if they are covered in paint.

Make sure the work area is ventilated. Your employer is required to provide proper ventilation

If you are working in a confined space, there should be a competent person to make sure the space is safe before work begins. Ask your supervisor to identify the competent person and check with him/her before entering a confined space.

Solvents are flammable. Keep them away from electrical hazards, heat, and other fire starting hazards.

Ask your employer if there is a water-based product that you can use instead of the solvent.

How can we stay safe today?
