

Getting to know your VOCs: Methylene Chloride

Methylene chloride (also known as dichloromethane, CAS 75-09-2) is a colorless, volatile liquid that has a chloroform-like odor (<http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/npg/npgd0414.html>) and excellent solvent properties. Due to its high volatility and odor, the use of any products containing methylene chloride will have an immediate impact on indoor air quality. A quick search of the NIH Household Products database (<http://householdproducts.nlm.nih.gov/cgi-bin/household/brands?tbl=chem&id=118>) yielded consumer products in the areas of automotive (e.g., degreasing solvents, carburetor and valve cleaners), arts and crafts (e.g., adhesive removers, acrylic cement), pesticides, and home improvement (e.g., floor strippers, paint removers, brush cleaners).

Certain formulations list methylene chloride as being present at up to greater than 80% of the total ingredients present. Obviously, these levels can lead to temporarily high methylene chloride levels in indoor air, especially in the immediate vicinity of the product use, making it mandatory to have good ventilation. If interested, information regarding the health effects of methylene chloride can be found at the NIOSH website listed above and both the EPA website (<http://www.epa.gov/ttnatw01/hlthef/methylen.html>) and the Agency for Toxic Substances & Disease Registry (ATSDR) website (<http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/substances/toxsubstance.asp?toxid=42>).

About Prism Analytical Technologies, Inc.

Prism Analytical Technologies, Inc. is a leading consultative air testing laboratory in the United States that is devoted to the chemical identification and analysis of contaminants in the air. We are a recognized leader in the development and deployment of ambient air testing methodologies for Fortune 100 and 500 companies, industrial hygienists, and environmental consultants. Prism's science-based technologies and wide range of air testing support help clients solve indoor air quality, process control, industrial, and environmental challenges.