

Checklist: Protect Your Health in the Refinishing Shop

When using chemicals such as volatile organic compounds or hazardous air pollutants, keep on top of health issues affecting your employees.

Precautions

- Keep Material Safety Data Sheets on hand to know what is contained in the paint removers and finishes in case of an accident.
- Be prepared to rinse chemicals from eyes or skin in case of accidental contact.
- If you smoke, recognize that you are particularly susceptible to injury from exposure to paint remover, solvent or finish vapors. Smoking materials are a fire hazard. Don't smoke when working in the refinishing shop.
- Ask your suppliers, periodically, about the availability of less toxic non-flammable paint removers, solvents, and finishes.
- Seek the advice of your physician about preventative measures, and ask about periodic blood test to assure no ill effects from exposure to chemicals.

Personal Gear

- Always wear protective clothing and equipment
- Do not wear contact lenses when using paint removers.
- Some breathing masks and respirators may increase exposure by trapping harmful chemicals near the nose and mouth.

Workspace

- Keep your area well-ventilated. An exhaust fan should vent vapors from paint removers outdoors. Give your shop a fresh air intake vent with a capacity of two cubic feet per minute per square foot of shop space.
- When possible, close covers on tanks containing remover and return used remover to a closed container to reduce exposure to potentially harmful vapors
- If you process a high enough volume of product to use sprayers when applying finishes, consider high volume, low pressure (HVLP) sprayers to get more of the finish onto the product and reduce employee exposure to the atomized finishes.
- If you use sprayers, consider installing a booth with an exhaust fan.