

Toxic Solvents in Office Products

BUY SMART, CHOOSE NON-TOXIC

Tips for Reducing Toxic Chemical Use at SPU



Spring 2006

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Seattle Public Utilities is taking steps to reduce hazardous chemicals in the workplace. One initiative in this campaign is replacing office products that contain toxic solvents with safer alternatives.

TYPES OF PRODUCTS:

- Dry Erase Markers
- Permanent Markers
- CRT and Copier Cleaners
- White Board Cleaner
- Correction Fluids
- Rubber Cement & Other Adhesives

Some common office products contain solvents that pose risk to employees and the environment. These products can be found in many SPU work sites – in vehicles, training rooms, offices, warehouses and tool rooms.

This fact sheet will help you find safer alternatives.

WHY DO OFFICE PRODUCTS CONTAIN SOLVENTS?

Products contain chemical solvents to help them work better. Solvents are very effective at spreading pigments, removing grease, and shortening drying time.

HOW DO SOLVENTS AFFECT MY HEALTH?

Solvents evaporate as the product is used. Both the user and near-by co-workers may breathe in solvent vapors. The amount of solvent in most office products is very small and normal use will not generally result in health effects. However, in low doses solvents can cause

- respiratory irritation
- headaches
- nausea
- dizziness
- intoxication

The cumulative release of solvents from inks, cleaners, and adhesives may also have environmental effects such as smog or destruction of the ozone layer.

WHAT LABELS MEAN 'NON-TOXIC'?

Non-toxic office products* should contain the following labels:

- **“Conforms to ASTM D-4236”** applies to art products which are tested and labeled by the manufacturer for chronic effects like cancer and brain damage. *This labeling does not mean the product is safe to use.*

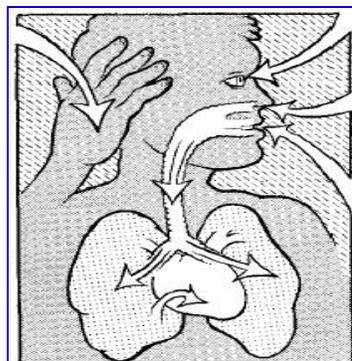
In Brief

Adhesives, cleaners, and inks contain chemical solvents. Types of solvents include hydrocarbons, alcohols, plant-derived, citrus-based, water-based or others. Common solvent names are:

- | | |
|------------------------|---------------------|
| * Acetate | * n-Butanol |
| * r-Butyrolactone | * n-Propanol |
| * Ethanol | * Diacetone alcohol |
| * 2-Methoxyethanol | * Xylene |
| * 1-Methoxy-2-propanol | |

Solvents are inhaled or absorbed through your skin. Short-term effects may include headaches or intoxication.

Once in your body these chemicals may affect your blood, liver, or kidneys. Prolonged use can affect the nervous system and may cause cancer or harmful reproductive effects.



Chemicals enter blood through the skin, eyes, mouth or, most frequently, the lungs.

To reduce your health risk:

Ö Purchase products with ingredients that pose the lowest hazard.

Ö Use solvents only in well ventilated areas. *If bothered by the odor, switch to another product.*

Ö Keep away from your skin.

Choose Safer Office Products

Available from City of Seattle Vendors

Examples:

Keeney's Office Plus 2008

- Expo low odor dry-erase markers, AP non-toxic
- Correction tape (instead of correction fluid)
- Roll'n Glue liquid glue, AP non-toxic
- Avery Permanent Glue Stics, AP non-toxic

Office Depot Products, 2006-2007 Green Book Catalogue

- Foray dry erase, odorless, AP non-toxic
- Expo low odor dry-erase markers, AP non-toxic
- Crayola markers for flipcharts, AP non-toxic and water-based
- Correction tape

Complete Office Supply Products, 2008 Catalogue

- Expo low odor dry-erase markers, AP non-toxic
- Bic Great Erase dry-erase markers, AP non-toxic, low-odor
- Avery Permanent Glue Stics, AP non-toxic
- Universal Permanent Glue Stick, AP non-toxic
- Quartet Dry-Erase Board Wipes, water-based cleaning formula, AP non-toxic
- Correction tape

Avoid Products with Cautionary Labels

Examples:

- Sanford, Expo Cleaner
- Sanford, Expo Cleaning Wipes for Dry Erase Surfaces
- Sanford, Expo Mild Formula Cleaner
- Acco Brands, Quartet Clean Erase Markerboard Cleaner
- Elmer's No-Wrinkle Rubber Cement
- Pentel 100W-S White Marker

A full list of CL labels can be found at
www.oehha.org/education/art/getart.html

- **“AP Non-Toxic”** means that toxicologists at the [Art & Creative Materials Institute \(ACMI\)](http://www.acmi.org) certify that the product does not contain toxic or injurious materials in sufficient quantity to harm children or adults. This seal replaces the previous non-toxic seals including: CP (Certified Product), AP (Approved Product), and HL (Health Label, non-toxic).



- **“Low-Odor, Low-VOC, or No-Odor”** means that the product is either water-based or made with alcohol rather than aromatic solvents such as xylene or toluene.

PURCHASE SAFER PRODUCTS

When purchasing new office supplies:

1. Choose water-based markers instead of solvent-based.
2. Choose low-VOC, low-odor, and non-scented products and markers.
3. Avoid xylene-based products.
4. Avoid permanent or water-proof inks.
5. Avoid rubber cements and adhesives with hexane or heptane.
6. Choose fine-point pens because they do not apply as much ink to the paper or release as much solvent in the air.
7. Dry erase markers come in two types: alcohol or ketone-based. Choose the alcohol-based kind.

RECOGNIZE AND AVOID TOXIC PRODUCTS

In order to avoid purchase of toxic products, you must **examine the label** for words such as *‘Caution’*, *‘Danger’*, or *‘Harmful or Fatal if Swallowed’*.



The **“CL Seal”** or **“HL Seal (Cautions required)”** identifies art products that are to be used only with caution. This means that it contains a carcinogen, neurotoxin, or developmental or reproductive toxicant. It may also signal an acute risk to your health from use.

If you have incomplete information about a product, or the product is unlabeled, it is best to look for a safer alternative. You can also request the MSDS from the supplier and submit it to Safety for review.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT

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