



KCA TOOL BOX TALK: Toluene Safety

Toluene, also known as methylbenzene, phenylmethane, or toluol, is a clear and colorless liquid. It is used in many products used on construction sites and workers can be exposed to toluene through inhalation, skin contact, eye contact or ingesting via the hands to mouth. These exposures may cause sickness immediately or cause health effects over time as well.

Some examples where Toluene can be found:

- Paint, paint thinners, varnishes and lacquers
- Metal cleaners
- Adhesives and glues
- Dyes and inks
- Gasoline and fuels

Short-term exposure symptoms:

- Headaches, dizziness, tiredness
- Dry or cracked skin
- Irritated eyes, nose and throat

Long-term exposure symptoms:

- Vision and hearing loss
- Incoordination, slow reaction, and cognitive impairment
- Immune, kidney, liver, and reproductive damage
- Difficulty sleeping

Prevention:

- Substitute with products that do not contain toluene *aka water-based* parts cleaners, inks, paints, lacquers, varnishes, adhesives and dyes when possible.
- Control fumes by opening doors and windows, using fans, and regularly inspect exhaust systems to make sure they are on and working properly.
- Clean up spills as soon as possible.
- Keep containers closed, except when removing or adding material.
- Avoid touching toluene-soaked material, such as wiping rags, with bare hands.
- Dispose of toluene-soaked materials into approved waste cans with a self-closing lid
- When possible, use methods that release less product into the air (paint roller instead of a spray gun).
- Flush and purge process pipelines and vessels before working on or in equipment.
- Wash your hands after working with toluene and products, especially before eating, drinking, or smoking.
- Establish a clean area for eating and taking breaks.
- Do not smoke, or work with toluene close or near open flames or areas that can generate a spark.
- Use PPE based on the MSDS sheet for wearing appropriate gloves, coveralls, face and boot protection, etc.
- Use respiratory protection if toluene exposure cannot be kept below the PELs

Signatures

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