

How to use paint strippers with hazardous chemicals safely

June 8 2018, by Kayla Zacharias

As retailers move to stop selling paint strippers that contain two potentially hazardous chemicals, a Purdue University chemist has some words of caution for those who continue to use this type of product.

"Like everything else – guns, knives, noxious chemicals – methylene chloride is safe when it is used safely," said George Bodner, a professor of chemical education at Purdue. "If I was going to use it, I would use it in an open garage or in the backyard. I'd also wear a surgical mask and gloves."

It was reported last week that Lowes Home Improvement announced that it will stop selling products that contain methylene chloride and N-Methylpyrrolidone (NMP) by the end of the year.

Several people have [died](#) from [exposure](#) to methylene chloride, usually when used in poorly ventilated spaces. The chemical is known to cause cancer in mice, but its long-term effects on humans are not totally understood. Short-term effects include headaches, dizziness, nausea and memory loss.

Exposure to NMP is especially dangerous for pregnant women – the [chemical](#) is known to cause fetal death.

The Environmental Protection Agency recently announced it will move forward with an Obama-era proposal to ban methylene chloride. The agency has not commented on its intentions regarding a similar ban on

NMP.

Bodner can discuss how to handle [methylene chloride](#) safely, how to identify these substances, alternative products for paint removal and potential health impacts from dangerous exposure.

Provided by Purdue University

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