

Dangerous substances and preparations: restrictions on the marketing and use of dichloromethane

2008/0033(COD) - 14/02/2008 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE: to restrict the sale and use of paint strippers containing Dichloromethane.

PROPOSED ACT: Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council.

BACKGROUND: Dichloromethane (DCM), CAS number 75-09-2 and EINECS number 200-838-9, is a colourless, halogenated aliphatic hydrocarbon compound with a penetrating ether-like or mild sweet odour. It is mainly used in the production of pharmaceuticals, solvent and auxiliary applications, paint strippers manufacture and adhesives.

The risks posed to human health by Dichloromethane (DCM) in paint strippers have been assessed in several studies which concluded that risk reduction measures are required throughout the EU to reduce the risks posed to human health during the application of DCM at industrial, professional and consumer level. The results of those studies were evaluated by the Commission's Scientific Committee on Toxicity, Ecotoxicity and the Environment (CSTEE - later named SCHER), which confirmed that the exposure to DCM released from paint strippers is of concern for human health.

During the last four years discussions have taken place between the Commission, Member States and other stakeholders. Despite strongly divergent opinions on the risks associated with DCM and on the safety of alternatives, an agreement has been reached on the need for marketing and use restrictions at Community level under Council Directive 76/769/EEC to limit the risks from DCM.

CONTENT: the main aspects of the proposal are:

- due to the fact that there is a need for limiting the risks during industrial, professional and consumer uses of DCM-based paint strippers, certain restrictions on placing on the market and use should be applied. The present Decision would amend Annex I to Directive 76/769/EEC by adding Dichloromethane, which will ensure harmonised rules applied at Community wide level.
- for the activities conducted in industrial installations some mandatory requirements should be applied, in order to increase the protection of workers, such as: the use of appropriate protective gloves, the installation of local ventilation or independent air supply respiratory protective equipment, and modification of the strip tanks, to ensure reduction of exposure of workers.
- professional uses should be banned in general, but Member States could opt to allow further use on their territories by specifically licensed professionals for those activities where they believe that the replacement of DCM is particularly difficult or inappropriate. Licenses should be subject to specific training requirements.
- lastly, a total ban of the placing on the market of paint strippers containing DCM for consumer uses should be applied as this is the only effective measure to eliminate the risks.