Topic 334: Safe Use, Handling, and Storage of Paint Thinners

Introduction: Paint thinners are necessary for oil based or enamel paint work. Paint thinners are a powerful solvent and are generally highly flammable. They are classified as a hazardous and toxic substance, and must be used, handled, and stored with care to prevent accidents such as fire, poisoning, or contamination. Following are guidelines for the safe use of paint thinners:

- Employers must ensure that employees who use paint thinners are properly trained in the safe use, handling, and storage of paint thinners, and provided with the following personal protective equipment:
  - Protective gloves, such as nitrile or chemical-resistant gloves.
  - Chemical splash goggles or a full face shield.
  - Respiratory protection (for use in enclosed or poorly ventilated areas).
- Employees who use paint thinners should read and understand the MSDS for proper use, handling, and emergency information for the type thinner you are using.
- Avoid inhalation of vapors. Use paint thinners in well-ventilated areas, outdoors if possible, or use respiratory protection if proper ventilation is unavailable.
- Do not smoke while working with paint thinner.
- Never use paint thinner near sources of heat, sparks, flames, or ignition.
- Always handle the paint thinner container with caution to avoid spilling, or breakage.
- Do not store paint thinner in a beverage or other container that may be mistaken for food or drink.
- Do not put rags used with paint thinner in the trash; place the used rags in closed metal containers to prevent spontaneous combustion.

Hazards of paint thinners:

Inhalation acute exposure effects: May cause dizziness, headache, watering of eyes, eye irritation, weakness, nausea, muscle twitches, and depression of the central nervous system. Severe overexposure can cause convulsions, unconsciousness, and even death. If user experiences breathing difficulty, move to air free of vapors. Seek medical attention.

Ingestion acute exposure effects: Ingestion of paint thinner may cause nausea, weakness, muscle twitches, gastrointestinal irritation, and diarrhea. Severe overexposure may cause convulsions, unconsciousness, and even death. DO NOT induce vomiting. If possible, locate the MSDS or container quickly and call your poison control center, hospital emergency room, or physician immediately.

Skin contact: Wash with soap and large quantities of water. Seek medical attention if irritation from contact persists.

Eye contact: Flush with large quantities of water for at least 15 minutes and seek immediate medical attention.

Chronic exposure effects: Reports have correlated repeated and prolonged overexposure to solvents with neurological and other physiological damage such as jaundice, bone marrow damage, liver damage, anemia, and skin irritation.

Storage of paint thinners:

- Store paint thinners in a fire resistant locker away from inhabited structures, and sources of heat, sparks, flames, or ignition.
- Keep paint thinners out of reach of children or animals.
- Store paint thinner in its proper container, clearly marked for the contents.
- Keep lids tightly sealed.
- Never put paint thinner into the trash or down the drain. If disposed of improperly, paint thinner can contaminate our water resources and the environment.
- Instead of throwing away used paint thinner, recondition it for reuse. Recyclers will process and re-use your old paint thinner saving disposal fees and helping the environment.

Work Site Review

Work-Site Hazards and Safety Suggestions:

Personnel Safety Violations: ______________________________ (Name of Chemical)

Material Safety Data Sheets Reviewed: ______________________________

Employee Signatures: (My signature attests and verifies my understanding of and agreement to comply with, all company safety policies and regulations, and that I have not suffered, experienced, or sustained any recent job-related injury or illness.)

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Foreman/Supervisor’s Signature: ______________________________

These guidelines do not supersede local, state, or federal regulations and must not be construed as a substitute for, or legal interpretation of, any OSHA regulations.

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