

Script of video of BBC Watchdog Programme – April 1996

Johnathan Maitland (BBC): At Easter sales at DIY stores soar as paints strip and wallpapers ripped and brushed are dipped. But before tackling the flock wallpaper and flaky paint there is something that DIY addicts should know. Two toxic ingredients in some of the most well-known products can damage your health.



JM: Paint Remover a bit of that...some varnish remover...just

the job...an all purpose paint remover...just what I want...and brush cleaner.



JM: Take these bestsellers Nitromors® Paint Remover and Nitromors® Varnish Remover. Polystrippa® All Purpose Remover and Polycell® Brush Restorer. They all contain something called **dichloromethane** – what? Well it's not something that is produced from the wrong of a cow, but it carries the possible risk of irreversible effects.

Brian Price, Chartered Chemist: That phrase means that it may well cause cancer. It doesn't mean that just a small drop of it on your skin will instantly give you a cancer, what it means is that over a prolonged period if you absorb quantities of the material it increases your chances of getting cancer.



JM: Is there any evidence of this that has caused cancer?

BP : There is evidence from laboratory animal studies that shows it will cause cancer in some species and it is a reasonable supposition that it will also do the same in human beings.

JM: The EC officially classes dichloromethane as a cancer causing agent, but our Government says that the latest evidence shows it causes cancer only in mice, not humans.



JM: But what about **methanol** found in paint thinners? This can also cause irreversible effects.

BP: It's a form of alcohol but it's not drinking alcohol and there have been many fatalities from people getting them mixed up. It will destroy the optic nerve if you absorb much of that which will mean you will lose your sight.

JM: People using these toxic chemicals regularly like painters and decorators are more at risk. The French though think they are so dangerous to your average DIY'er that they are locked up in cabinets so when Monsieur and Madame fancy a bit of DIY or bricolage, as the French call it, they must be told by staff how to use the product safely before they buy them. Here we rely on labels that need a PhD to understand them. The makers say if they are used sparingly in well ventilated areas you will be safe...but then again you could always use these things (*puts on breathing mask and full face shield*).



.....so remember try not to scare the children!

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