

Working in the Motor Vehicle Repair Industry

Information Sheet

May 2010

Working in the Motor Vehicle Repair (MVR) industry exposes people to different hazards, including dangerous chemicals. This information sheet should assist those working in the industry to ensure they can identify, and are aware of, the hazards involved and how to protect themselves and their workers from dangerous chemicals.

Chemical Hazards

Many chemicals used in this sector during various tasks can be hazardous to the health of workers. Workers also need to be aware that other hazardous substances, such as exhaust gases and fine dusts, can be generated during MVR work and also must be controlled. Examples of some of these that you need to be aware of include:

- **Spray Painting:** Isocyanates (two-pack products), used when spray painting, can cause asthma and dermatitis.
- **Repair:** Solvents used in degreasing can irritate the skin and some can also damage the eyes. Oils and lubricants can also irritate the skin and waste engine oil may cause skin cancer. Petrol and diesel contain substances that may cause cancer and liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) is dangerous to health if breathed in at high concentrations.
- **Cleaning:** Solvents used in car valeting can cause headaches, dizziness and nausea. They can also irritate the skin, leading to skin soreness and itching

Sources of Information – The Product Label and Safety Data Sheet

By law, suppliers of chemicals are required to label their

products with hazard symbols, warnings and safety advice if the chemical is hazardous. This information can then be used by workers to identify what hazards the particular chemicals they are using pose and what precautions to take in order to use them safely.

In addition, suppliers are obliged to provide safety data sheets (SDSs) for dangerous chemicals used in the workplace. The detailed information provided on the SDS can also be used to identify the chemical hazards and to put the necessary controls in place. All workers should have access to these SDSs and be familiar with their contents – if your supplier has not given you one, you should ask him to provide it. The information provided on a SDS will also assist in completing any chemical risk assessments, as required.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

- Follow the instructions on product labels and SDSs.
- Respiratory protective equipment (RPE) may be needed for some tasks. Ensure that you select the correct type of RPE and filter, know how to fit your RPE and that it is stored and maintained correctly. Seek advice from your RPE supplier.
- If working with isocyanates, wear air-fed breathing apparatus and use spray booths or separate rooms.



- Use work clothing to protect skin from contamination.
- Wear appropriate protective gloves - single use nitrile gloves are ok; throw them away after every use.
- Use skin creams for skin protection and to help in washing contamination from the skin. Remember these are not barrier creams. Never clean hands with concentrated cleaning products, solvents or fuel.
- Wear eye protection when using chemicals which are irritants or corrosive such as solvents.

Health Advice

- If spray painting, use high level health surveillance for asthma. Consult an occupational health advisor if necessary.
- Workers should regularly check their skin for dryness and soreness. If these effects appear, check the proper use of skin creams and PPE.

Storing Chemicals

- Store chemicals securely in a cool, dry, dark place capable of containing spills. Ensure chemicals are segregated appropriately (e.g. ensure acids and alkalis are kept apart).
- Never store more chemicals than you need.
- Store containers so that their labels face outwards.
- Store heavier items and corrosive chemicals on lower shelves.
- Never store chemicals in open containers.
- Keep the storage area well ventilated.
- Store flammables separately.
- Keep a spill clean-up kit nearby.
- Never decant concentrated chemical into an

unlabelled container and do not re-use empty containers that contained a different chemical.

Cleaning and Housekeeping

- Keep the work area clean.
- Clear up spills promptly.
- Dispose of hazardous waste (e.g. waste paint) through a specialised contractor.

Simple Checklist

- ☑ Prepare written risk assessments (required by law), highlighting the key hazards, risks and controls in place.
- ☑ Know the dangers of the chemicals that you are using by reading the labels and SDSs.
- ☑ Use and store personal protective equipment according to instructions.
- ☑ Throw away single-use gloves every time you take them off.
- ☑ Never clean hands with concentrated cleaning products or solvents.
- ☑ Check hands regularly for dryness and soreness.
- ☑ Use skin creams as instructed.
- ☑ Use eye protection as required.
- ☑ Clean up spills promptly.

Further Information

- The Health and Safety Authority's web site www.hsa.ie.
- Contact the Health and Safety Authority at wcu@hsa.ie or LoCall **1890 289 389**.

