

OSHA issues
exposure rules
for solvent

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Occupational Safety and Health Administration issued new guidelines Wednesday to reduce workplace exposure to methylene chloride, a widely used solvent that is used in manufacturing electronic circuit boards.

The chemical also has been shown to cause liver, lung and blood cancers in laboratory mice and has been listed by the government as a probable human carcinogen.

Acting OSHA Director Patrick R. Tyson said the agency also would decide soon on petitions by the United Automobile Workers and six other unions for new emergency and permanent standards lowering the federal ceiling on occupational exposures.

The OSHA guidelines recommend substituting less toxic alternatives in some industrial processes, the use of personal protective clothing and respirators and increased engineering controls such as exhaust ventilation.

OSHA and the Environmental Protection Agency estimate that nearly a million workers, including those in Silicon Valley, are exposed to methylene chloride on the job at "generally high" levels.

Last May, EPA listed the chemical as a probable human carcinogen based on laboratory experiments that produced the tumors in mice and rats.

Since then, the Food and Drug Administration and the Consumer Product Safety Commission also have taken action to restrict the use of methylene chloride, particularly in cosmetic products.

The chemical is most widely used in aerosol sprays and as a paint remover and degreasing agent. It also is used extensively in urethane foam blowing.

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