

Environmental and Occupational Health & Safety Unit

OHS ALERT

Non-Flammable Aerosol Paints Hazard Alert - Update

The Victorian Government Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) recently ceased to use non-flammable aerosol marking paints (when marking trees that are at risk of collapse in fire-prone areas) that contained Methylene Chloride.

Methylene Chloride is listed in Safe Work Australia's Hazardous Substance Information System, as a Category 3 carcinogen - that is suspected of potentially containing cancerous properties. Another chemical found in many aerosol paints is Tetrafluoroethane. This also gets a mention under the National OHS framework as hazardous and dangerous - especially if used incorrectly.

So, in the interest of construction worker safety, we urge all safety reps to check out the Material Safety Data Sheets of any type of aerosol paints (flammable and/or non-flammable) being used on site to see if they contain these chemicals.

If the aerosol paint contains Methylene Chloride - cease using it and get a safer and less hazardous alternative.

If it contains Tetrafluoroethane, make sure it is being used correctly and all the appropriate safety precautions, as stated in the MSDS, are being strictly adhered to.

There MUST be a Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) for any "substance" or "material" to be used on site - (especially paints, glues, insulation, wood panels, etc...)¹. The MSDS must be on site before the "substance" or "material" is used, and it must be kept on site at all times. Demand to see the MSDS before any potential hazardous product is used on site - it's the only sure way of making sure that what is being used is safe and will not cause harm to anyone. It's also a legal OHS legislative requirement.

If in doubt - see your OHS representative or contact your organiser or the CFMEU OHS Unit.

¹ See CFMEU Hazardous Materials Alert July 2015

Safety is union business.

STAND UP. SPEAK OUT. COME HOME.