

May 7, 2018

Dear Lowe's Manager,

Thank you for taking the time to speak with us here today. We are with VPIRG, Vermont's largest environmental and consumer protection organization with over 50,000 members and supporters across the state.

We are here because we're concerned about deadly and cancer-causing chemicals found in paint strippers sold at Lowe's – chemicals like methylene chloride and N-Methylpyrrolidone (NMP).

We are here today as part of the national "Mind the Store" campaign. Consumers and advocates like us are visiting stores across the country today urging Lowe's to remove these harmful chemicals from products.

Paint strippers containing methylene chloride and N-Methylpyrrolidone (NMP) are extremely dangerous, and can even be **deadly** for your customers. Recently, one of your customers, Drew Wynne of Charleston, SC, died after working with a paint stripper containing methylene chloride.

This was not an isolated incident. At least three other people died from methylene chloride paint strippers over the past year. According to reports from various sources, including the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), methylene chloride has been linked to more than 50 deaths since 1980. The chemical is also linked to several types of cancers as well as liver, kidney, and reproductive toxicity. NMP can also be quite dangerous to your customers. It is particularly risky for pregnant women, as it can cause miscarriages and harm the developing fetus.

According to the EPA, over 60,000 workers and 2 million consumers are exposed to methylene chloride and NMP every year from paint strippers, just like the ones you sell.

Methylene chloride has been banned in paint strippers in the EU since 2012, and NMP is being considered for a ban as well. Last year, the EPA proposed banning the use of methylene chloride and NMP in paint strippers, but recently the agency has backed off under pressure from the chemical industry.

In the absence of federal action, retailers can play an important role in restricting toxic chemicals, as Lowe's did when you banned phthalates in vinyl flooring and neonicotinoids in pesticides.

Over the past month, over 100,000 consumers around the country have signed petitions to Lowe's urging your company to act. As Lowe's customers and consumer advocates fighting to protect Vermonters from toxic chemicals, we expect you to do the right thing, especially when safer alternatives are available.

We hope you will talk to your corporate headquarters about our visit and concerns, and encourage your senior management teams to ban the sale of methylene chloride and NMP based paint strippers within six months or less. While I understand that the decision to sell products containing dangerous chemicals is not yours, I urge you to use the influence you have as manager to bring this issue to your regional manager and corporate headquarters.

Thank you for your attention to this critically important issue.

Sincerely,

Paul Burns
Executive Director, VPIRG