



Used Solvents: Handling, Storage and Disposal

Solvents are liquid substances that can dissolve other substances. Paint thinners and strippers, varnishes, degreasing fluids, mineral spirits and petroleum distillates are common solvents. Most of these liquids are flammable and toxic.

The Dangers

Waste solvents can be hazardous to human health. Prolonged exposure can cause nausea and headaches and, in extreme cases, can be fatal.

Many chlorocarbon solvents can slowly accumulate in the body and can cause liver deterioration similar to cirrhosis. Other solvents, such as chloroform and ether, are anaesthetics that will put you to sleep if you breathe too much of them.

If released indiscriminately, waste solvents can also threaten the environment by contaminating water and soil and contributing to air pollution.

Protecting Your Health

You can protect your health by minimizing your exposure to solvents and treating them with respect. Minimizing your exposure means avoiding the fumes as well as direct contact with the liquid. Use solvents outdoors if possible. If you use them indoors, make sure you have windows open and good ventilation. Don't wash your hands in a solvent.

Storing Solvents

Solvents must be stored in a manner that prevents any release, and that complies with municipal and territorial fire codes.

Keep an inventory of the kinds of chemicals you have stored and where they are kept. In the event of an emergency such as fire, the inventory will provide valuable information to emergency response crews.

If you store solvents outside, cover the containers to protect them from precipitation.

Waste solvent containers must be kept apart from:

- other waste products,
- human and animal food, and food ingredients,
- human residences, and
- animal barns, pens and corrals.

When transporting solvents, the container must be labeled according to *The Transportation of Dangerous Goods Act*.

Contact the City of Whitehorse Fire Department (668-8685) or the Fire Marshall (667-5217) for more information about storing solvents.

Recycling and Disposal

Solvents can be recycled. In most cases, used solvents have not chemically degraded; they have just picked up impurities. The recycling process separates the solvents from the impurities.

You can dispose of used solvents at any permitted special waste management facility. A list of these facilities in the Yukon can be obtained from the Environmental Programs Branch.

The Department of Environment collects special wastes in the territory once each year. The department covers the cost of collecting and transporting the waste to a disposal facility. Waste generators pay only the disposal costs.

Householders may take their waste solvents to household hazardous waste collections where available. Contact the Environmental Programs Branch for information regarding the next collection.

Special Waste Permits

You must obtain a Special Waste Permit from the Environmental Programs Branch if you handle more than 5 litres of solvents per month, more than 5 kilograms of solvent sludge per month, or if you store solvents or solvent sludge.

Spills

A solvent storage area can be contaminated by small continuous releases of solvents, or by one large spill. If 500 millilitres or more of waste solvent is spilled, the person who owns the waste, or is in control of it at the time of the spill, must report the spill to an Environmental Protection Officer (Conservation Officer), or the Yukon Spills Report Centre at 867-667-7244.

Containment and clean-up action should begin as soon as possible to protect human health and the environment. Cleaning up a contaminated site usually costs more money than storing solvents properly in the first place.

**Spills must be reported immediately to the
Yukon Spills Report Centre in Whitehorse at (867) 667-7244
(24 hour service).
Collect calls are accepted.**

For more information on the proper handling and storage of solvents and other special wastes, please contact:

Environmental Programs Branch
Department of Environment (V-8)
Government of Yukon
Box 2703
Whitehorse, YT Y1A 2C6

Phone: (867) 667-5683
Toll Free: 1-800-661-0408 (extension 5683)
Fax: (867) 393-6205
email: envprot@gov.yk.ca

Copies of Yukon regulations may be viewed online at <http://environmentyukon.gov.yk.ca/monitoringenvironment/> under the "Standards & Approvals" section, or at any Yukon Public Library, territorial agent, territorial representative or regional services office. You may purchase copies at the Inquiry Centre, Yukon Government Administration Building, 2071-2nd Avenue in Whitehorse, or by mail from the Subscriptions Clerk, Yukon Government Queen's Printer, Box 2703, Whitehorse, Yukon, Y1A 2C6 (phone (867) 667-5783 or toll free 1-800-661-0408 extension 5783).

