

## **Massachusetts Chemical Use Officials Designate New Higher Hazard Substance**

*Methylene chloride added to higher hazard substances list, reporting requirements increased*

BOSTON – December 20, 2013 - The Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) today announced that methylene chloride has been added to the Massachusetts Toxics Use Reduction Act (TURA) list of higher hazard substances.

Methylene chloride, also known as dichloromethane, is used as a metal degreaser, coolant and paint stripper and is an ingredient in some adhesives. Adverse health effects include skin, eye and respiratory irritations and exposure may cause liver, kidney or central nervous system damage. There has been one death attributable to methylene chloride reported in Massachusetts.

"Methylene chloride poses significant health hazards," said Liz Harriman, Deputy Director of the Toxic Use Reductions Institute (TURI) at the University of Massachusetts Lowell. "Fortunately, practical alternatives are available for most uses. We look forward to working with Massachusetts businesses to stay ahead of the curve and move toward safer substitutes."

A policy analysis by TURI shows that there is significant regulatory precedent for the designation, both nationally and internationally. It is recognized as a toxic pollutant by the Clean Water Act and as a reportable chemical under the Emergency Planning and Community Right to Know Act. The product has also been banned from consumer use in paint strippers by the European Union.

"Methylene chloride is an undisputed toxic chemical, so designating it as a higher hazard substance is a perfect use of the TURA program resources," said Elizabeth Saunders, Coordinator of the Alliance for a Healthy Tomorrow. "Protecting worker health is a top priority of the Alliance and we strongly support the state in encouraging companies to reduce the use of methylene chloride."

Currently, manufacturing companies with more than 10 employees that incorporate 25,000 pounds or more of the chemical in their products, or use 10,000 pounds for production and operations, are required to report to the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection, pay a reporting fee and conduct toxics use reduction planning. The new designation drops the reporting threshold to 1,000 pounds for all applications.

"It is very important to prioritize hazardous chemicals and encourage businesses to move toward less toxic chemistries in their manufacturing operations," said Rich Bizzozero, Director of the Office of Technical Assistance and Technology (OTA).

Companies using methylene chloride in regulated amounts must begin tracking and reporting usage effective January 1st.