

Trump's Methylene Chloride Rule Leaves Workers Exposed to Deadly Chemical

EPA abandons proposed ban on commercial uses of paint-stripping chemical linked to dozens of workers' deaths

By [Earth Justice](#)

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Today, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency [unveiled a rule](#) that leaves workers across the United States exposed to methylene chloride, a lethal chemical used in paint strippers that has already caused dozens of worker deaths. Breaking EPA's repeated promises to ban commercial and consumer uses of methylene chloride paint strippers, the Trump administration instead finalized a ban solely on consumer uses, opening a loophole that leaves thousands of workers at risk of illness and death.

"We will not allow this administration to once again attack our community, because that is what this rule does, it leaves workers blatantly exposed to deadly chemicals," **said Hector Sanchez Barba, LCLAA Executive Director.** "Latino and immigrant workers are overly represented in jobs that require exposure to deadly working conditions, including paint strippers. LCLAA is committed to ensuring that these women and men are granted the same protections as workers in other industries. Methylene chloride must be fully banned."

In January 2017, EPA acknowledged those risks and proposed a ban on commercial and consumer uses of methylene chloride paint strippers. Since then, at least four people — including two workers — have died from methylene chloride exposure. However, despite repeated promises to finalize that proposal, the Trump administration reversed course and excluded workers from its final methylene chloride rule.

"Workers will continue to die because the Trump administration can't bring itself to ban even the most toxic chemicals on the market. EPA's decision to leave workers exposed to lethal paint strippers is unconscionable and unlawful," **said Jonathan Kalmuss-Katz, a staff attorney at Earthjustice.** "The methylene chloride rule sends a clear message to workers that their lives matter less than chemical industry profits."

Acute exposure to methylene chloride can cause asphyxiation, heart failure, even sudden death, while long-term exposure increases risks of cancer, liver disease, and other serious health effects. Last month, LCLAA, represented by Earthjustice, sued EPA over its failure to regulate the chemical's unreasonable risks to workers, consumers, and bystanders, as required by the Toxic Substances Control Act.

The methylene chloride lawsuit filed by LCLAA, represented by Earthjustice, and the Natural

Resources Defense Council is currently pending in the United States District Court for the Southern District of New York.

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