



Methylene Chloride (DCM) Use Frequently Ask Questions

The new EPA inhalation exposure limits (including 2 ppm as an 8-hour time weighted average, and 16 ppm as a 15-min time weighted average) requires us to take appropriate measures and develop and implement an exposure control plan. Exposure monitoring through Environmental Health & Safety (EHS) will occur every 3 months, 6 months, or 5 years depending on the specific exposure levels of each lab.

What are the potential health hazards of DCM?

Acute non-cancer effects: For *inhalation*, effects are mainly on the central nervous system and can include dizziness and headaches at low exposures. At extremely high exposures such as in a confined space, effects are more serious and include loss of consciousness and respiratory depression. For *dermal exposure*, effects can include skin irritation and burns.

Chronic non-cancer effects: for chronic exposure by inhalation or dermal exposure, effects include liver dysfunction and increase in blood carboxyhemoglobin.

Cancer: for chronic inhalation exposure, methylene chloride is considered possibly carcinogenic, with human data inconclusive, but animal data showing increases in liver and lung cancer.

What can I do now to minimize my exposure to DCM?

- Prioritize working with DCM in the fume hood.
- Do not store or use DCM squeeze bottles on the bench top.
- Only dispense DCM into secondary containers in the fume hood. **Do not purchase containers of DCM larger than 4L, since they cannot be used in the hood.**
- Move hazardous waste containers into the fume hood when pouring DCM waste.
- Cap samples, flasks, round bottoms, etc., when transferring solutions around the lab.
- Make sure solvent and waste flasks on analytical equipment are properly sealed.
- Move rotovaps or other non-vented equipment into the fume hood whenever feasible.
- Wear poly vinyl alcohol (PVA) or Silver Shield gloves when handling DCM.

If you are worried you have been overexposed to DCM, contact Risk Services (505) 277-0750 or risksvcs@unm.edu.