United States Environmental Protection Agency

TCE Consumer Fact Sheet
February 2020

What is trichloroethylene (TCE) and where is it found?

TCE is a chemical that is commonly used as a solvent. TCE has a pleasant, sweet smell, though you can breathe it in without smelling it. TCE vapors can also be absorbed through your skin. The vast majority of TCE use is in commercial or manufacturing facilities and sold through industrial supply chains as refrigerant chemicals and degreasers. While not widely marketed to consumers, there are products containing TCE that consumers can purchase.

Why should I be concerned about exposure to TCE?

Acute exposures to TCE raise a number of health effects concerns, including developmental toxicity and immunotoxicity. Repeated exposure to TCE has been associated with effects in the liver, kidneys, immune system, and central nervous system. Additionally, TCE has the potential to cause cancer in humans. EPA has concerns for all these effects.

How do I know if TCE is an ingredient in a product?

In general, labels identify product ingredients so look at them carefully, or consult the material safety data sheet or the safety data sheet available from manufacturers. TCE can be referred to as trichlor, trike, tri, and sold under a variety of trade names. It is identified by its Chemical Abstract Service number, which is 79-01-6.

What steps can I take to reduce my exposure to TCE?

In 2017, EPA issued a proposed rule to reduce the risks from TCE in consumer aerosol degreasing products by prohibiting the use of TCE in aerosol degreasers. Thus, consumers and workers should avoid using TCE-containing aerosol degreasers. EPA does not believe that wearing clothes dry cleaned where TCE may have been used as a spotting agent poses a concern.

What action is EPA taking to address risks from TCE?

In December 2016 and January 2017, EPA published two proposed rules under section 6(a) of the Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA), one to ban commercial use of TCE in vapor degreasing, and the other to ban use of TCE in commercial and consumer aerosol degreasing and as a spot cleaner in dry cleaning. Learn more about the proposed rules.

Additionally, TCE is one of the first 10 chemicals being evaluated under TSCA, as amended by the Frank R. Lautenberg Chemical Safety for the 21st Century Act, for potential risks to human health and the environment. During this evaluation, EPA will assess the other remaining uses of this chemical. EPA issued a draft risk evaluation for TCE in February 2020. Learn more about the first 10 chemicals and EPA's risk evaluations for existing chemicals.

In 2015, EPA reached an agreement with PLZ Aeroscience Corporation to voluntarily phase-out the use of TCE in an arts and crafts spray fixative product marketed to consumers. To ensure that these phased out chemicals are not reintroduced into commerce, EPA has taken action that will provide the agency with the opportunity to review and, if necessary, block the new use or import if it is determined that it could pose a risk.

For more information on EPA's actions to address risks from TCE, please visit EPA's TCE webpage at http://www.epa.gov/assessing-and-managing-chemicals-under-tsca/trichloroethylene-tce.