

SUPPORT FOR PREVENTING THE MISUSE OF VOLATILE SUBSTANCES



PILBARA REGION INFORMATION FOR INDUSTRY



Australian Government



Government of Western Australia
Drug and Alcohol Office



Volatile Substances

Code of Conduct

A range of volatile substance products, including aerosols, solvents and gases, is misused for the purposes of intoxication.

To assist in restricting the access to these substances, we will use, store, transport and dispose of all volatile substance products in the following ways:

Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All volatile substance products to be used in accordance with manufacturer’s specifications • Where practicable, use non-solvent based products and aerosols with alternative propellants • Ensure accurate inventory of products is undertaken
Store	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All volatile substance products to be securely stored i.e: not visible or obtainable by the general public • Ensure these products are accessible by authorised personnel only
Transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All volatile substance products to be securely transported and not visible to the general public whilst vehicle unattended (when not at secure worksite)
Disposal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All volatile substance products to be disposed of at secure sites not accessible to the general public • Ensure accurate inventory of products is undertaken
Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Storage, transportation and disposal practices of all volatile substance products to be reviewed annually



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What are volatile substances?

Volatile substances (also known as inhalants or solvents) are a range of products that, when vaporised and inhaled, can cause people to feel intoxicated or high, similar to being drunk.

Preventing the misuse of volatile substances

As a legitimate consumer of volatile substances, you and your staff can play a role in preventing misuse by limiting opportunities for volatile substances to be obtained for the purposes of intoxication.

The Volatile Substances Code of Conduct that accompanies this Information Kit has been developed by the Goldfields Volatile Substance Use Working Group in partnership with the Kalgoorlie Boulder Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

This booklet is provided to support the Volatile Substances Code of Conduct and provide information to help you:

- identify products that may be misused
- identify potential users and those who may supply to users, and
- store, transport and dispose of products in a way that makes them less accessible to inhalant users.

Inhaling volatile substances is a serious social and health problem. When intoxicated, people can hurt themselves or others.

Repeated or long-term use can damage the heart, brain and other vital organs. Sudden death may occur at any time – even the first time a person inhales.

The community needs your help. Industry can provide an important community service by limiting access to volatile substances.

Benefits of the responsible management of volatile substances

Responsible management of volatile substances can benefit your business by:

- improving your business' standing in the community through being socially responsible and community minded
- reducing interruptions to business continuity and productivity
- minimising the risk of death or injury of an intoxicated user on your worksite
- reducing theft of products and associated insurance claims
- deterring intoxicated people from entering your premises or damaging your property, and
- improving compliance with occupational health and safety standards.


What products are used for purposes of intoxication?

Hundreds of volatile substance products that are readily available to the general public may be used for the purposes of intoxication. However, a much smaller number of products is commonly sought out by those who intend to misuse them. The popularity of these products varies according to local trends.

One of the most dangerous volatile substances with respect to the risk of causing sudden death is butane.

Commonly, butane comes in the form of cigarette lighter refills, disposable cigarette lighters, and butane gas cartridges used for camping stoves. The propellant in most aerosols is either butane or other hydrocarbons.

Aerosol spray paints pose a high risk to young people as they are one of the most commonly sought-after substances. Some aerosols containing solvent products are misused for the contents (such as paint), while others not containing solvents are still sought for the propellant gas (butane or other hydrocarbons).



The following volatile substance products are only some of those that are misused:

AEROSOLS

- **Spray paint aerosol cans**
- **Other aerosols**

SOLVENTS

- **Glues and adhesives** – super glues, rubber cement
- **Other solvents** – toluene, paint strippers, degreasers and cleaning products
- **Petrol**

GASES

- **Butane** – portable butane/propane cartridges for camping stoves, soldering irons and flame torches.

If you are unsure about whether a product can be misused, contact the **Alcohol and Drug Information Service** (see the Contacts section at the end of this booklet).

What are the effects of inhaling volatile substances?

Inhaled vapours are absorbed through the lungs and rapidly reach the brain. Intoxication is similar to that caused by alcohol. The effects of inhaling come quickly and disappear within a few minutes to half an hour. In order to stay intoxicated, a person needs to continue to sniff at regular intervals.

Effects may include:

- depressed breathing and heart rate
- feelings of relaxation, loss of inhibitions
- unsteady gait, slurred speech
- mood swings, erratic behaviour, aggression
- vomiting
- hallucinations, paranoia, disorientation/confusion
- seizures, loss of consciousness
- death

What harms are caused by volatile substance misuse?

Volatile substances are poisonous. Long-term use can cause serious damage to the heart, lungs, liver, kidneys and brain, particularly the areas of speech and memory.

Harm can also occur from impaired judgment and confusion whilst intoxicated, resulting in accidents and other risk-taking behaviours.



Can sniffing volatile substances cause death?

Inhaling volatile substances can cause death, even for a first-time user.

Inhaling volatile substances can lead to an overdose, resulting in cardiac arrest. This is because the heart can become oversensitive to adrenalin, which may cause it to beat ineffectively, not cope with exertion, or stop beating. **This is why it is important not to chase or frighten anyone who may be using volatile substances.**

Death can occur as a result of respiratory failure or pneumonia caused by long-term damage to the lungs.

Becoming intoxicated from sniffing volatile substances can lead to death from burns, a car accident, suffocation or suicide.

Who misuses volatile substances?

Volatile substances are misused by both females and males across all social groups and income levels.

Surveys indicate that volatile substance inhalation is usually only a passing phase of experimentation, most common among young teenagers. Generally, volatile substance users are aged 10–35 years, with the main group aged 12–20 years.

Young people who sniff generally try it once or twice then discontinue use. Few become regular or dependent users. However, some continue to use into their 20s and 30s.

Longer-term users often have a wide range of other problems; they may be socially isolated and often use alone.

What can industry do?

Volatile substance products are commonly stolen from industrial worksites, rubbish tips, or from the back of work vehicles. Therefore, it is important that volatile substances are securely stored, transported, disposed of and accounted for.

The following steps provide a guide to responsible management of volatile substances:

1. **Identify:** make sure you know which products could be misused.
2. **Use, storage, transportation and disposal:** apply the Volatile Substances Code of Conduct by ensuring volatile substances are secure at all times.
3. **Inventory:** make sure you can account for all volatile substances.
4. **Staff training:** provide training to staff to help them understand their responsibilities in accordance with the Code of Conduct. Establish protocols for safe work practices when using volatile substances.
5. **Signage:** display signs that indicate your support for the responsible storage of volatile substances (see signs included with this kit).
6. **Get involved:** take part in community efforts to address volatile substance misuse and network regularly to stay informed (see Contacts section at the end of this booklet).

Responding in an emergency

- Call for your designated first aid officer.
- **If unconscious**, lay the person on their side and clear their airway.
- Call for an ambulance (000).

Contacts

For further information or advice

The Alcohol and Drug Information Service (ADIS), a 24-hour drug and alcohol counselling and information service..... (toll free) **1800 198 024**

Local contacts

FaHCSIA, South Hedland:

Regional Coordinator Petrol Sniffing Strategy..... **(08) 9138 3114**

For volatile substance related police assistance

Police **131 444**

For emergencies

Ambulance or police **000**

