

EPA to ban carcinogenic chemical found in degreasers, cleaners

October 24 2023, by Cara Murez



The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) proposes to ban a cancer-causing chemical commonly used as a furniture cleaner and degreaser.

The ban would prohibit most uses of trichloroethylene (TCE) within one year. Limited remaining commercial and industrial uses would be phased

out over a longer period and would require stringent worker protections.

"Today, EPA is taking a vital step in our efforts to advance President Biden's Cancer Moonshot and protect people from cancer and other serious [health risks](#)," said EPA Deputy Administrator [Janet McCabe](#).

"The science is loud and clear on TCE. It is a dangerous toxic chemical and proposing to ban it will protect families, workers, and communities," McCabe said in an agency news release.

In addition to liver and [kidney cancer](#), health risks associated with the toxin include disruption of the nervous and reproductive systems, and damage to [fetal development](#), the EPA said.

TCE is used in cleaning and furniture care products, degreasers, brake cleaners, and tire repair sealants. The EPA says safer alternatives exist.

The proposal was made under the Toxic Substances Control Act. It would ban manufacturing, processing and distributing TCE for any use.

"TCE has left a toxic legacy in communities across America. Today, EPA is taking a major step to protect people from exposure to this cancer-causing chemical," said [Michal Freedhoff](#), assistant administrator for the Office of Chemical Safety and Pollution Prevention.

"Today's proposal to end these unsafe, unrestricted uses of TCE will prevent future contamination to land and drinking water and deliver the chemical safety protections this nation deserves," Freedhoff added.

A longer transition to phasing out TCE would be allowed for critical uses by [federal agencies](#), in battery separators used to make electric vehicle batteries and for manufacturing certain refrigerants while the industry transitions to more climate-friendly refrigerants.

The [chemical](#) is commonly found at Superfund sites as a contaminant in soil and groundwater.

Health risks are present even at very small concentrations of TCE, according to the EPA. People who live near facilities where TCE is made and used are at higher risk for developing these health conditions.

The EPA is also proposing to allow essential lab use and proper disposal of TCE wastewater to continue for 50 years, subject to workplace protections.

The agency will take public comments on the proposed rule for 45 days after it's published in the Federal Register. The EPA also plans to host a public webinar for employers and workers. Anyone can attend. The date, time and registration information will be announced soon.

More information: The U.S. National Cancer Institute has [more](#) on trichloroethylene.

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