



**Questions and Answers:
Acute health hazard associated with
aerosolized waterproofing products**

The MDCH and the Michigan poison centers have received numerous reports of acute lung problems in people and their pets associated with exposure to leather, and tent and other waterproofing products that come in spray cans. As a result, the MDCH is issuing this warning to consumers to use aerosolized waterproofing products *with extreme caution*.

**Always use waterproofing products that come
in a spray can outdoors.**

**Keep all pets away from the area until the
product has fully dried.**

Question: The labels on these products suggest they are safe to use in a well-ventilated area, but MDCH is recommending using them only outdoors. Why?

Answer: Some of the reported individuals used the product in a well-ventilated area and still became ill, including some who using it inside tents set up outside with all the flaps open. In fact, some individuals may have only used the product outside. This is why MDCH recommends using these products with EXTREME caution.

Question: Are all waterproofing products hazardous or only a few kinds?

Answer: We don't know at this point, but it appears that some are more toxic than others. There have been some reports of clusters of acute lung illness associated with a number of products. Two products: Wilson's Leather Protector, and Stand 'n Seal Grout Sealer have been recalled by the Consumer Product Safety Commission in the last ten years, but other products have been identified by people who became ill after exposure.

Question: Can I tell which products are safe by reading the label?

Answer: No! These clusters suggest that the more toxic products contain some kind of fluoropolymer. However, the manufacturers are not required to put this on the label, because fluoropolymers by themselves do not appear to be toxic. It may be that they become toxic when

they interact with the other chemical constituents in the can as the contents become aerosolized. Therefore, all brands should be handled with extreme caution.

Question: What are the characteristics of the illness from this exposure?

Answer: Usually within several hours of exposure individuals start becoming short of breath and coughing. They may also develop chest pain, nausea and vomiting, and headache. Clinical signs and symptoms are consistent with chemical pneumonitis, including x-ray findings (pulmonary infiltrates), reduced oxygen in their blood, and breath sounds such as wheezing and crackles. Many of the individuals reported to MDCH and the Michigan poison centers were so sick they had to be hospitalized.

Question: If I use such a product and start having trouble breathing, what should I do?

Answer: Call poison control at 800-222-1222 or, if you are acutely ill, go to your closest hospital emergency room.

Question: What is being done to prevent these illnesses in the future?

Answer: MDCH and the Michigan poison centers are working with the Consumer Product Safety Commission and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to investigate these case reports and understand the cause of the illnesses better, so as to ensure that products marketed to consumers are safe.

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MDCH Encourages Michigan Consumers To Use Caution When Using Boot Leather Protector And Sealant Products

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State health officials are recommending that consumers use extreme caution when using boot leather protector and sealant products after Michigan Poison Control Centers have received more than 90 calls that link several products with serious respiratory illnesses.

"Because of the frequency of the calls to the state's poison centers, we believe it is extremely important for citizens to recognize the potential risks associated with these protectors," said Janet Olszewski, Director of the Michigan Department of Community Health. "Until this health investigation is completed, consumers should consider avoiding these products altogether, or, if necessary, be sure to use all spray-on leather protectors outdoors and allow the leather to dry thoroughly before bringing it inside."

Olszewski said that both Michigan Poison Control Centers in Detroit and Grand Rapids have received calls regarding respiratory illnesses in humans and pets in Michigan associated with these products. More than 160 reports have been received by poison control centers across four other states, including Ohio, Indiana, Kentucky, and Pennsylvania.

The most frequently reported product associated with the illnesses is "Jobsite Heavy Duty Bootmate," distributed by Manakey Group, LLC, but other products with similar names have been cited by callers to poison control. The manufacturer has been contacted and indicated that the product contains a chemical known to cause acute lung illness.

Symptoms primarily have included coughing, chest pain, and shortness of breath. At least 11 individuals have been hospitalized as a result of the illness. No human deaths have yet been reported; one cat has died. Illness in product users, bystanders, and pets have been reported both with product use indoors and outdoors, so extra caution should be used when using the product.

The federal Consumer Product Safety Commission also has been informed of many of these cases and products. Poison control centers in Michigan and other states, in collaboration with state health departments and the manufacturer, are currently conducting an investigation to determine what actions should be taken to protect the public, including possible product recalls.

All reports of illness meeting the above symptoms in humans or animals in Michigan should be reported to the poison control centers at Children's Hospital of Michigan or DeVos Children's Poison Control Center by calling 800-222-1222.

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