

SAPMA AGAIN URGES GOVT ACTION AGAINST 'TOXIC' LACQUER THINNERS

The SA Paint Manufacturing Association (SAPMA) has again urged the government to ban the use of methanol in the manufacture of hazardous lacquer thinners which is freely available to the general public from paint retail shelves.

Deryck Spence, executive director of SAPMA, at a recent meeting with Ramsook Loykisoonial, the Department of Health (DOH) Director General, in Pretoria, urged the the DoH to take heed of the fact that methanol was significantly more dangerous when consumed by humans than leaded paints, for which controlling legislation had been approved by government for many years. "SAPMA also pointed out that lacquer thinners, with its lethal methanol content, is often stored in plastic bottles in domestic garages, and could easily be mistaken

for drinkable water by children," he explained. Spence said as much as 45% of methanol formed part of the lacquer thinners formula, particularly because it was cheaper than conventional solvents.

"SAPMA told the DoH that we appreciate the difficulty and time required to have the substance officially placed on the Hazardous Substance list so we urged the department, in order to protect our children, that special warning labels be made compulsory on lacquer thinners sold through retailers to alert the public and parents in particular about the deadly methanol contained in the bottle. SAPMA also asked that the government made special childproof caps compulsory on lacquer thinners bottles

— some of our members have already voluntarily introduced this type of bottling. SAPMA asked the DoH to officially place on record that the association and its members would not accept responsibility should any fatalities occur through the accidental drinking of lacquer thinners.

The DoH's Loykisoonial told the SAPMA delegation that in order for methanol to be placed on the Hazardous Substances list, the government would have to be satisfied that the listing would benefit the population and that technical substantiation of the dangers of the chemical would have to be submitted before a decision could be made. SAPMA undertook to source international studies on the dangers of methanol and the DoH Director General agreed to source similar documentation from overseas.