

ADHESIVE REMOVAL: RISKS OF SOLVENT AND CHEMICAL CLEANERS

Industry Practice and Manufacturer Limitations

Chemical cleaners and solvents—ranging from bio-based agents (like citrus, soy, or limonene) to hydrocarbon or chlorinated solvents—are occasionally used to strip old adhesives or coatings from flooring substrates. While these substances can be effective in loosening stubborn residues, their use is strongly discouraged by many manufacturers, including Lighthouse Adhesives.

As a matter of formal policy, Lighthouse Adhesives does not provide warranty coverage for any flooring installations conducted over substrates that have been exposed to solvent or chemical cleaners. This policy is explicitly stated in their product data sheets and container labeling.

Why Solvent Use is Problematic

Solvents and chemical cleaning agents may penetrate into the concrete substrate, leaving behind residues that are not always visible or detectable immediately. Over time, these chemicals can migrate back to the surface, leading to:

- **Bond failure** between the adhesive and the substrate
- **Off-gassing or odor issues**
- **Poor indoor air quality**
- **Flooring deformation or discoloration**

For these reasons, chemical cleaners are **not recommended** as part of substrate preparation prior to the installation of new floor coverings.

Asbestos Tile (VAT) Abatement and Solvent Use

Solvents are sometimes used in the removal of cutback adhesive associated with vinyl asbestos tile (VAT) abatement. This process is tightly regulated due to the risks of airborne asbestos fibers and must comply with OSHA



(continued)

regulations and applicable federal, state, and local guidelines on asbestos-containing materials (ACMs).

During asbestos abatement, various agents—such as water, surfactants, polymers, or solvents—may be used to control dust and fiber release. However, after this process, it's essential to ensure that no solvent or chemical residue remains. Residual contaminants can undermine future flooring installations by weakening adhesive bonds or causing long-term damage to the new flooring materials.

To ensure a clean, bond-ready surface, it is strongly advised to avoid chemical or solvent-based cleaners entirely during and after abatement. Refer to key guidance sources such as ASTM F710, RFCI Recommended Work Practices, and 29 CFR 1910.1001 for regulatory compliance.

Preferred Removal Methods

Lighthouse Adhesives recommends using **mechanical removal methods** as the safest and most reliable way to eliminate existing adhesives. Techniques such as:

- **Dry scraping**
- **Grinding**
- **Bead blasting**

These methods are effective and minimize risks to the substrate. Non-asbestos adhesive waste is typically easy to dispose of after mechanical removal.

For pressure-sensitive adhesives, residual tackiness can be reduced by applying inert mineral-based absorbents. Alternatively, a light mist of a diluted soap solution (1 ounce of dishwashing liquid per gallon of clean water) can be used to soften the adhesive. Let the solution sit for up to an hour—without saturating the surface—to aid in removal and reduce dust.



(continued)

If Solvents Have Already Been Used

In cases where a solvent or chemical cleaner has already been applied:

- Allow the substrate to dry thoroughly—this may require enhanced ventilation.
- Test for resurfacing residue using the rubber mat test: Place a rubber mat over the area for 24–48 hours, then inspect for moisture, staining, or residue beneath. A clean result may suggest no immediate issue, though it is not a guarantee of long-term success.
- In high-risk cases, consider encapsulation, membranes, shot blasting, or re-cleaning to mitigate potential problems.

⚠ Important Note: There is **no definitive method** to determine whether a chemically treated slab is completely free of residue. This uncertainty is why many manufacturers decline to warrant installations over such substrates.

⚠ Note:

This document is for general reference only. While the information provided is based on the industry's best practices, Lighthouse Adhesives does not accept responsibility for any errors or liabilities resulting from the use or interpretation of this guidance.

