

May 2008

Letter to Customs Officials,

This road tanker/tank container contains or has contained a diisocyanate (TDI – toluene diisocyanate or MDI – diphenylmethane diisocyanate). This chemical is used in the manufacture of polyurethanes.

The tank contains vapours which can cause a strong asthmatic reaction if they are breathed-in. This condition can last a life-time. Any symptoms may take up to 24 hours to develop. All chemical workers are trained to never breath-in these vapours and, if there is a danger of exposure, they wear breathing apparatus.

At certain discharge installations nitrogen is used to empty the container. Nitrogen is an asphyxiating gas and the lack of oxygen is not mitigated by using a gasmask filter.

As diisocyanates react with moisture from the atmosphere, the opening of the manlids will, in addition to the above health effects, have a negative effect on the inside of the container and ultimately will result in more frequent cleaning with a negative impact on the environment.

Any entry into the tank, such as for an inspection, must not be done without proper protective equipment, which, as a minimum, consists of breathing apparatus, long sleeves and gloves. Please consult the supplier's Safety Data Sheet (SDS) before opening the tank.

There is always a risk that the tank is under pressure either because of the discharge or because of the reaction of the diisocyanate with moisture. Only a slight overpressure could result in serious injuries. Therefore, always depressurise the tank before opening the manlid.

Any opening of the manlids or entry, with or without proper protective equipment, is the responsibility of the person doing so. Neither the supplier of the diisocyanate nor the owner of the tanker will take the responsibility for any health effects nor damage which occurs by opening or entering the tank.

Yours faithfully,

Dr Wolfram Frank
ISOPA Secretary General

ISOPA represents the producers of MDI, TDI and associated polyols: Bayer, Dow, Elastogran (BASF), Huntsman, Perstorp, Repsol and Shell