

SAFEGUARDS

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SOFTLINES

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FRANCE PROGRESSIVELY BANS PERCHLOROETHYLENE IN THE DRY-CLEANING PROCESS FOR TEXTILES

On 19th April, 2012, the French Ministry of Environment and the French Health & Labour Ministry issued a press release calling for a phase-out of existing dry-cleaning installations using Perchloroethylene in the dry-cleaning process¹.

Perchloroethylene, also known as tetrachloroethylene, is a chemical solvent that is widely used in the textile industry for dry-cleaning, processing and finishing fabrics. It has high quality dry-cleaning properties; rapidly penetrating the fibres to dissolve soils, stains, fats and oils without shrinkage or damage to the garments. However, it has been classified as a hazardous substance; being associated with eye, skin and respiratory irritation, and may cause damage to the human central nervous system. Research reports ^{2,3} indicate that the use of Perchloroethylene may result in an unacceptable level of risk to human health, safety and the environment. It could be released to and detected in ambient air in and near dry-cleaning facilities as well as in adjacent residences. There are also some studies showing that if Perchloroethylene is discharged from factories and dry-cleaners there is the risk of it contaminating groundwater and even drinking water.

Perchloroethylene is used by more than 90% of dry-cleaners in France. The purpose of the proposed phase-out is to reduce the amount of Perchloroethylene entering the environment by eliminating it at the source. The phase out is proposed to run between now and the year 2022.

According to the proposed rule, no new dry-cleaning shops using the Perchloroethylene process will be permitted to be located adjacent to residential properties and any old dry-cleaning shops found with Perchloroethylene contamination in the air > 1250 micrograms per m³ should be closed immediately.



¹ [Press Release](#) (French)

² [Study on Tetrachloroethylene from World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#)

³ [Toxicological Review of Tetrachloroethylene \(Perchloroethylene\) from EPA](#)

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The recommended time frame for phasing out of existing Perchloroethylene operated dry-cleaning machines:

- No later than 1st January 2014, stop operating a machine aged over 15 years
- No later than 1st January 2018, stop unregistered installations (see note below)
- No later than 1st January 2022, stop installation of registered Perchloroethylene machines except those meeting the required minimum distance to neighbouring property

Note: The NF registration is a voluntary and collective certification mark in France. It certifies that an industrial or consumer product complies with quality criteria defined in French, European or international standards ^{4,5}.

⁴ [NF Mark](#)

⁵ [NF Mark for closed circuit dry-cleaning machines](#)



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