



Inhalant Abuse

In recent years inhalant abuse—which is more commonly referred to as “huffing”, “ bagging”, or “dusting”—has become increasingly popular to adolescents and older teens. According to the U.S. Department of Justice, inhalant abuse “is the purposeful inhalation of chemical vapors to achieve an altered mental or physical state, which for most abusers is a euphoric effect.”

There are well over 1,400 common household products that are abused as inhalants. One such household product that can be found and is often used in schools and classrooms today is the computer keyboard air duster. Popular brands include: Read Right Office Duster, Falcon Dust-Off, and Memorex Air Duster. However, any brand labeled for this type of use would fall into this category.

While these products are entirely safe when they are used as directed, air dusters can be harmful and even fatal if used improperly. Because these dusters are found in most classrooms, it is very important that school staff be made aware of the harmful effects that can occur due to improper use of these products.



Cases involving the improper use of air dusters include:

- September 2001: A 19-year old male in Alaska came home around 4 a.m. and had been huffing from a can of Dust-Off. He later died.
- January 2004: An 18-year old female in New York was killed when her vehicle was struck by a vehicle driven by a 20-year old male who had been huffing from a can of Dust-Off when his car went over the double yellow lines and crashed head-on into hers.

- March 2005: A 14-year old male in Ohio was found dead in his bedroom with a can of Dust-Off next to his face. His mother, a nurse, and father, a police officer, did not realize their son was inhaling Dust-Off.

Recently, manufacturers have added an additive to their product that makes the contents of the can extremely unpalatable and unpleasant to inhale. The additive does not change how the product works with normal, recommended use. However, manufacturers are hoping this will deter adolescents from the improper use of their products.

It is imperative that computer keyboard air dusters are used with caution. Individuals need to make themselves aware of the potential dangers of the product. Air duster cans state “KEEP OUT OF REACH OF CHILDREN” and “avoid prolonged breathing of vapors which can be fatal.”



If staff members utilize these products, it is important that they understand the products should be secured in a safe or locked location. In no instance should a student be able to use air dusters or be able to remove the product from the classroom.

If you have any questions, please contact your SISC Safety and Loss Control representative or contact the SISC office at (661) 636-4604.