



4. Solvent Use

The use of solvents and other chemical products can result in emissions of various ozone precursors (i.e., criteria pollutants).¹ Nonmethane volatile organic compounds (NMVOCs), commonly referred to as “hydrocarbons,” are the primary gases emitted from most processes employing organic or petroleum based solvents, along with small amounts of carbon monoxide (CO) and oxides of nitrogen (NO_x) whose emissions are associated with control devices used to reduce NMVOC emissions. NMVOC emissions from solvent use increased 9 percent from 1990 to 1996. Surface coatings accounted for just under a majority of NMVOC emissions from solvent use (46 percent), while “non-industrial” uses accounted for about 33 percent and dry cleaning for 3 percent of NMVOC emissions in 1996. Overall, solvent use accounted for approximately 33 percent of total U.S. 1996 emissions of NMVOCs.

Although NMVOCs are not considered primary greenhouse gases, their role as precursors to the formation of ozone—which is a greenhouse gas—results in their inclusion in a greenhouse gas inventory. Emissions from solvent use have been reported separately by the United States to be consistent with the inventory reporting guidelines recommended by the IPCC. These guidelines identify solvent use as one of the major source categories for which countries should report emissions. In the United States, emissions from solvents are primarily the result of solvent evaporation, whereby the lighter hydrocarbon molecules in the solvents escape into the atmosphere. The evaporation process varies depending on different solvent uses and solvent types. The major categories of solvents use include: degreasing, graphic arts, surface coating, other industrial uses of solvents (i.e., electronics, etc.), dry cleaning, and non-industrial uses (i.e., uses of paint thinner, etc.). Because many of these sources employ thermal incineration as a control technology, CO and NO_x combustion by-products are also reported with this source category.

Total emissions of nitrogen oxides (NO_x), nonmethane volatile organic compounds (NMVOCs), and carbon monoxide (CO) from non-energy industrial processes from 1990 to 1996 are reported by detailed source category in Table 4-1.

Methodology

Emissions were calculated by aggregating solvent use data based on information relating to solvent uses from different sectors such as degreasing, graphic arts, etc. Emission factors for each consumption category were then applied to the data to estimate emissions. For example, emissions from surface coatings were mostly due to solvent evaporation as the coatings solidify. By applying the appropriate solvent emission factors to the type of solvents used for surface coatings, an estimate of emissions was obtained. Emissions of CO and NO_x result primarily from thermal and catalytic incineration of solvent laden gas streams from painting booths, printing operations, and oven exhaust.

¹ Solvent usage in the United States also results in the emission of small amounts of hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) and hydrofluoroethers (HFEs), which are included under Substitution of Ozone Depleting Substances in the Industrial Processes sector.

Table 4-1: Emissions of NO_x, CO, and NMVOC from Solvent Use (Gg)

Activity	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
NO_x	1	2	2	2	2	3	3
Degreasing	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Graphic Arts	+	+	1	1	1	1	1
Dry Cleaning	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Surface Coating	1	1	2	2	2	2	2
Other Industrial Processes	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Non-Industrial Processes	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
CO	4	4	4	4	5	5	5
Degreasing	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Graphic Arts	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Dry Cleaning	+	+	+	+	1	1	1
Surface Coating	+	1	1	1	1	1	1
Other Industrial Processes	4	3	3	3	3	3	3
Non-Industrial Processes	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
NMVOCs	5,217	5,245	5,353	5,458	5,590	5,609	5,691
Degreasing	675	651	669	683	703	716	599
Graphic Arts	249	273	280	292	302	307	353
Dry Cleaning	195	198	203	204	207	209	172
Surface Coating	2,289	2,287	2,338	2,387	2,464	2,432	2,613
Other Industrial Processes	85	89	93	93	90	87	48
Non-Industrial Processes	1,724	1,746	1,771	1,798	1,825	1,858	1,905

Note: Totals may not sum due to independent rounding.
+ Does not exceed 0.5 Gg

Data Sources

The emission estimates for this source were taken directly from the EPA's *National Air Pollutant Emissions Trends, 1900-1996* (EPA 1997a). Emissions were calculated either for individual sources or for many sources combined, using basic activity data (e.g., the amount of solvent purchased) as an indicator of emissions. National activity data were collected for individual source categories from various agencies.

Activity data were used in conjunction with emission factors, which together relate the quantity of emissions to the activity. Emission factors are generally avail-

able from the EPA's *Compilation of Air Pollutant Emission Factors, AP-42* (EPA 1997b). The EPA currently derives the overall emission control efficiency of a source category from a variety of information sources, including published reports, the 1985 National Acid Precipitation and Assessment Program emissions inventory, and other EPA data bases.

Uncertainty

Uncertainties in these estimates are partly due to the accuracy of the emission factors used and the reliability of correlations between activity data and actual emissions.