



Alliance for
Consumer
Education

Dusters – FAQ Sheet

Background

Often called “canned-air” or “computer cleaner”, a compressed gas duster is a little bit more involved than most people care to imagine or understand. Because the pressurized blast that is delivered is invisible and odorless most people incorrectly assume it is “air-in-a-can”. Compressed-gas dusters are not air in a can! The cleaners actually contain a liquefied gas. When you spray, this liquid turns into gas and released through the nozzle. Many manufacturers have added bittering agents to their dusters to deter inhalant abuse.

Since its introduction in the 1970’s the compressed-gas duster has been safely and effectively used for a multitude of applications ranging from computer cleaning to craft cleaning to model preparation and cleaning to automotive detailing and so on. Dusters are members of the aerosol products family, but unlike other aerosol products which propel a liquid or powder (i.e. hair spray, cooking spray, insecticide, etc.) through the nozzle, in a duster, the propellant is used to propel itself through the nozzle.

It is important to note, when used properly and in accordance with the directions on the can this product is completely safe and has proven to be of great value to its users. However, when used incorrectly, which in many cases is the result of not understanding the product it can have harmful effects.

So what’s really inside?

Simply putting air in a can would not sustain or maintain the needed pressure to do the job that millions of people need for their cleaning tasks. Most dusters contain one of two chemicals: tetrafluoroethane (HFC-134a) or difluoroethane (HFC -152a).

What happens when chemicals are intentionally inhaled?

Inhalant abuse refers to the deliberate sniffing of fumes, vapors or gases from common household products for the purpose of “getting high”. Unfortunately, dusters are just one example of products that are commonly misused. When used as intended, dusters are beneficial, however when abused they may prove harmful.

Different inhalants yield different effects, yet generally speaking, because inhaled chemicals are absorbed through the lungs into the bloodstream and distributed to the brain and other organs, the effects of inhaling can be severe. Within minutes, the user experiences feelings of intoxication and may become dizzy, have headaches, abdominal pain, limb spasms, lack of coordination, loss of control, hallucinations, and



impaired judgment. Worse, he or she may even die from a condition known as **Sudden Sniffing Death Syndrome**, which can even occur with first time users

Long-term inhalant users generally suffer from muscle weakness, inattentiveness, lack of coordination, irritability, depression liver or kidney damage and central nervous system (including brain) damage. The dangers are real, the side effects are severe and the high is not worth risking your life.

Proper Usage

Below you will find a few tips to remember when using any compressed-gas duster

Before Use

- Read the label carefully before using a duster.
- Point nozzle away from self and others.
- Hold can upright and pull trigger to clear valve of any liquid.
- Do not tilt excessively, shake, or turn can upside down before or during use.

To Use

- Hold can upright approximately 2 inches away from item to be cleaned.
- Pull trigger in a series of short blasts.
- Use in a well ventilated area.
- Do not leave in direct sunlight, enclosed vehicles, or expose to temperatures above 120 F.

For more information on usage of a duster, please consult the label on the back of the product.

Now that you know what can you do?

Now that you know dusters are not air in a can, spread the word! The next time someone makes a reference to “canned air” politely correct them by letting them know which chemicals can be found in the can. The next time you observe someone using a duster incorrectly share some usage tips with them, and remind them to always read the label.

As you amaze your peers with your new found knowledge of computer gas dusters, don't forget to spread awareness of inhalant abuse prevention. If more dialogue is taking place around the serious issue more people will be aware of what it is and what to look for.