



Questions And Answers On Chloropicrin

The pest control industry in the United States relies on fumigation with Vikane® gas fumigant to eliminate drywood termites and other wood-destroying insects in homes, warehouses and other types of structures. Vikane is a colorless, odorless, tasteless gas and is non-detectable by people during fumigation. As such, as an extra measure of safety, a warning agent, chloropicrin, is released within the structure to ensure that it is free of people prior to introducing the fumigant, as well as to prevent entry prior to the fumigator certifying the structure for reoccupancy.

As a homeowner, you may have questions related to the use of chloropicrin in your home. The following will help answer those questions and help you become better informed about chloropicrin's use and its role in the fumigation process.

What is chloropicrin? Chloropicrin is a colorless liquid with a very strong odor that causes eye irritation and tearing when used in small quantities. It is used as a warning agent to help ensure a structure is free of people prior to fumigating with Vikane. Chloropicrin also serves as a deterrent from early or accidental entry into a structure under fumigation.

Why is chloropicrin used? As previously mentioned, Vikane gas fumigant is a colorless, odorless, tasteless gas. In this form it cannot be detected by people during fumigation. Therefore, your fumigator will release chloropicrin within the structure at least five to 10 minutes prior to introducing Vikane in order to ensure it is clear of occupants. Dow AgroSciences has mandated the use of chloropicrin with fumigation since Vikane was first marketed in 1961 to help safeguard homeowners and others involved in the fumigation process.

How is chloropicrin used? Extremely small quantities are used as part of the fumigation process, at concentrations that provide adequate warning without causing lingering odors or other adverse effects for homeowners or the environment.

How is chloropicrin released into my home? The fumigator carefully measures and pours the chloropicrin onto an absorbent material in one or more shallow pans. The pans are then placed near fans in the area where Vikane will be released. Air movement from the fans helps evaporate the chloropicrin and distribute it throughout the structure. Chloropicrin is released at least five to 10 minutes before introducing Vikane to make sure it has sufficient time to act as a warning agent within the structure.

Does my fumigator do anything else to ensure that everyone has left the structure besides releasing chloropicrin?

Yes. Your fumigator will conduct a walk-through inspection to help confirm everyone is out of the structure prior to releasing chloropicrin. Your fumigator will also post warning signs around the structure to help prevent early or accidental re-entry. In addition, your fumigator may use secondary locks on the entrances of your home that require a special key to gain access to help ensure the structure remains free of people throughout the fumigation process.

Is the amount of chloropicrin used during fumigation harmful to people?

Should I be concerned about it affecting my health? According to the product label, chloropicrin is used at a very low application rate of 1 fluid ounce for every 10,000 to 15,000 cubic feet of fumigation space. This results in a controlled concentration of chloropicrin within the structure during the fumigation. After the fumigation period, your fumigator will aerate the Vikane and chloropicrin down to very low levels acceptable for you to re-enter your home. Once clearance has taken place, the amount of chloropicrin remaining in the home is at such a low level that homeowners need not be concerned with any toxicological effects.

What should I do if I sense chloropicrin or experience symptoms after the fumigation?

Minute amounts of chloropicrin remaining in the structure may cause tearing, a scratchy throat or coughing. Although every effort is made to clear chloropicrin from your home, it may still be detectable at extremely low concentrations. If you sense chloropicrin immediately following the fumigation of your home, do not become concerned. A small amount of chloropicrin does not mean Vikane is still present. Vikane aerates from structures more rapidly, and fumigators use sensitive detection equipment to ensure that Vikane is cleared from your home down to very low levels acceptable for you to re-occupy the structure.

Does chloropicrin harm the environment? When released into the atmosphere, chloropicrin breaks down in sunlight in less than a day. According to the Chloropicrin Manufacturers Task Force, there is no significant ozone depletion potential associated with the quantities of chloropicrin used with fumigation.

Is chloropicrin used for anything else besides a warning agent? Yes. Chloropicrin is registered with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as a fumigant insecticide for soil and stored grains. As a registered insecticide, chloropicrin has undergone significant scientific review for its effects on health, safety and the environment.

A few simple steps can assist in clearing any remaining chloropicrin from your home:

- Open windows.
- Operate air-handling systems such as heat or air conditioning. Place fans blowing outward near windows.
- Call the fumigator to inform him of what you are experiencing.
- Leave the structure for a few hours if you are uncomfortable.
- If following these recommendations does not solve the problem, contact the fumigator again for further instructions and assistance.

If you have additional questions about chloropicrin or its proper application, contact your professional fumigator.

