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The Aviation Point

Aircraft Cleaning Solvents: MEK, Acetone, Isopropanol and the Rest

Four solvents do most of the wiping on a sheet metal repair: MEK, acetone, isopropyl alcohol and a dry cleaning solvent.

The solvents at a glance

Solvent	Flash point (NIOSH)	Typical use	Watch for
MEK	16 F (-9 C)	Coating wipe test, thinning, cleaning	Not on nitrocellulose; not in confined spaces (AC 6-90a(14))
Isopropyl alcohol	53 F (12 C)	Final wipe before paint, light cleaning	Light cleaner only
Acetone	0 F (-18 C)	Degreasing, resin thinning	Attacks plastics and finishes; fire risk with conversion coat
Dry cleaning solvent	See SDS	Clean reworked area before conversion coat	Never kerosene or fuel (AC 6-136h)

Key points

- **No procedures.** The SRM and AMM name the cleaner for each task.
- **No grade numbers.** The sources do not give solvent specification numbers for shop use.
- **Flash points are NIOSH values** in US units; the SDS of your product may differ.
- **Skydrol-safe** is a label, not a standard; we found none to cite.

SOURCES · FAA AC 43.13-1B CHG 1, Chapter 6 · FAA-H-8083-31B, Aviation Maintenance Technician Handbook - Airframe, Volume 1 · CDC NIOSH Pocket Guide to Chemical Hazards: 2-Butanone · CDC NIOSH Pocket Guide to Chemical Hazards: Acetone · CDC NIOSH Pocket Guide to Chemical Hazards: Isopropyl alcohol · Environment and Climate Change Canada: 1,1,1-Trichloroethane · US Clean Air Act, section 604 · PPG Aerospace, Desoprime HS CA7233 Military Epoxy Primer, Technical Data Sheet

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Educational reference only, not approved data. Always consult the applicable SRM, AMM, or AC 43.13-1B and your certifying authority.