

## How Plastic Pipe Glue Affected Me

Statement of Thomas Gibson

To the Department of Housing and Community Development  
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My name is Tom Gibson. I live in French Camp, California, near Stockton. I am a plumber and have been a plumber since 1968 with a break from 1972 to 1979 in the stucco business. I work for Seco Plumbing Company. I am 50 years old and in good health.

On September 14, 1988, I was working on a remodeling job at a house in Stockton. Remodel jobs need to be done carefully and on time since there are frequently owners living there or waiting to move back in. Since I am the most experienced plumber with Seco, I frequently get these jobs.

The outside temperature that day was around 100 degrees. That morning I worked in the crawlspace under the floor of the house. The crawlspace was about 18" so I was working in tight quarters. There was a little ventilation in the crawlspace. It was pretty dark down there too. I attached an ABS pipe to a cast iron pipe and ran ABS pipe to the drains under the floor. There were a lot of branch fittings. Each fitting required me to glue fittings and pipe together at least twice.

I used ABS glue from a can. At that time, I always left the can open to save time. Nobody wants to stay in a crawlspace like that any longer than he has to. It was very hot down there, probably over 100 degrees.

I had to work fast since the glue sets up pretty fast in that kind of heat. You have to apply the glue, put the pipe and fittings

together, and adjust them so they are straight pretty fast or it will dry before everything is in place.

I use a lot of glue to make sure the joint is secure and won't leak. I like to do good work and I don't want to have to go back into a crawlspace like that to tear out previous work and fix it for leaks. That is as bad or worse as having to go down there in the first place and as I said, you don't spend any more time in an 18" crawlspace than you have to.

I was in the crawlspace about three hours. After lunch, I went up into the attic to put in a vent pipe of ABS. The attic was really tight. I had to crawl over the rafters on my stomach, carrying the pipe, fittings and glue with me. It was even hotter in the attic, I would guess around 110 degrees. It took a lot of effort to crawl around there. My shirt was literally soaked with sweat.

I finished in the attic about 2:30 and came down. I started to feel dizzy and sick to my stomach. My boss drove up and said I didn't look very good. Since the crawl job was done, he sent me home.

When I got home, my wife said I looked white and had a clammy forehead. I lay down, but I felt terrible. My heart seemed to be acting up. It would go very fast, then seem to just stop, then go real fast again. My chest hurt. I could not eat.

I was up and down all that night. Lying down didn't help. Walking didn't help. My heart kept acting up and I had a headache. It felt like there was some pressure in my brain, like it was going

to pop out of my head. My arms felt like they weren't attached, and my brain just wasn't operating the way it should.

I felt pretty bad the next morning and ended up going to St. Joseph's hospital around noon that day, September 15, 1989. I told the doctor about the ABS glue, but at first he thought I was having a heart attack since my heartbeat was not even like it should be. I have never had any heart trouble. Dr. Bahari checked my heart with a catheter and found no problem. He decided my problems were because of the ABS glue. Dr. Dah, whom I still see, checked my lungs and could find nothing wrong. He also decided the ABS glue caused my problems.

My severe symptoms continued for several days. I was released from the hospital on September 17, 1988. I continued to be dizzy for three days afterward if I bent over. Slowly I felt better but I was weak and tired for a week or more. I didn't go back to work until Monday, October 3, 1988, two and one-half weeks after the ABS glue poisoning.

All the doctors that have examined me have concluded that my problems were caused by the ABS glue. I had my heart checked on the treadmill at the Stockton Pulmonary Center. They told me I had a normal and healthy heart. I went to see Dr. Harrison in San Francisco and he also decided that the ABS glue had poisoned me. His report is attached to this statement.

I don't wear gloves when I am working since they are just too clumsy. I can't do good work with gloves on. The ABS glue bottle says to wash your hands but doesn't say anything about gloves. Sometimes my hands are black with ABS glue when I get done with a

day's work. I try not to get ABS glue on my hands and clothes, but it is impossible to do, considering I work in such small confined spaces. When my clothes get washed, some of the glue gets on my family's laundry, so the glue isn't just my problem.

After all of this happened I found out that the ABS glue has methyl ethyl ketone in it, which is pretty dangerous. I am all right now, but I wonder what the long-term effects of the poisoning will be. Dr. Dah sees me regularly to watch my health but no one seems to know what could happen in the future.