Most of us here will use paint within our lifetimes for ‘decoration, protection, identification [or] sanitation’.

I for one am currently in the middle of redecorating and repainting part of my family home.

I even bought this lovely tub of Dulux paint to do so.

But is it lovely? Dulux was given an ethical rating of C and scored 37 out of 100 ethical index points. And it’s not surprising.
Thousands of substances are found in paints and many can affect both the environment and health.

Continued exposure of workers in paint manufacturing industries has put many employees in harm’s way; 45,600 at AkzoNobel, the owner of Dulux, alone.

Several sources argue that prolonged inhalation and dermal contact with these chemicals can lead to increased cancer risk.

The World Health Organisation, for instance, ‘reported a 20-40% increased risk... of cancer’ among paint workers.

Other ailments include headaches, asthma, skin and eye irritation and strain on vital organs. Even Dulux stated that exposure to the solvents in their paints could lead to ‘respiratory system irritation’.

I asked a representative from Dulux to make a statement on the matter but I did not receive a response.
Hello everyone, I’m Propiconazole. I’m one of the substances that has a low acute toxicity. I’m only highly toxic to fish, not birds or bees.

That’s not true.

Excuse me?

Well, while you’re not toxic to birds, you have a moderate acute toxicity and are in fact slightly toxic to honeybees.

Yeah? Well, what about you Octhinone? You’re not perfect either!

What’s wrong with me?
You’re listed as ‘highly toxic’ by the EPA as well as ‘slightly hazardous’ by the World Health Organization (WHO) since you’re moderately to highly toxic to zooplankton, fish and crustaceans.

So basically, the same as you then!

Besides, we both know Titanium Dioxide is the worst.

Hey! What did I do?

Occupational exposure via inhalation causes oxidative stress and can lead to lung problems.

Such as?

There are also concerns that you may be carcinogenic to humans.

On the carcinogen front, there’s insufficient evidence to suggest this! Even the EPA stated that the available data was inadequate for meeting the criteria.

You contribute to environmental pollution from the emissions and waste produced during your manufacture.

Not to mention that you can have serious impacts on the health of factory workers ‘through inhalation and dermal contact’

How?

Cell damage

- Lung inflammation
- Genetic mutations
- Reduced immune responses

*Granulomas*

Thanks, Zinc Pyrithione

Kegley et al 2016a

US EPA 2007, Kegley et al 2016a

Kegley et al 2016b

Porwal 2015

2016, Porwal 2015

Skocaj et al 2011, Group 2013

Tran et al 2000, Skocaj et al 2011, Group 2013

Nosh 2013, in PubChem

Skocaj et al 2011, Group 2013

Pimentel 1992

You’ve also been listed as a possible carcinogen by the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC).

That’s true. A study of workers in six European Titanium Dioxide factories revealed significant increases in lung cancer rates.

Oh! And you can cause the release of toxic gas!

Look, what happened at the Cristal Pigment factory wasn’t my doing. It was Titanium Tetrachloride’s fault for coming into contact with water.

But Titanium Tetrachloride is used to make you!

The toxic gas cloud that erupted from the vessel killed one worker and injured two others!

Then it was the factory’s fault for violating the Health and Safety at Work Act of 1974. But I don’t see why you’re picking on me. What about Terbutryn?

What about him?

Well he’s toxic too!

Only slightly.

Yeah, high toxicity among humans is unlikely unless they’ve ingested a large amount of him.

Plus he’s toxic to fish!

*Moderately toxic. Not highly toxic.*
And he’s listed as a carcinogen! A possible carcinogen. The WHO says it’s unlikely that he’s a hazard.

What difference does that make?

*arguing continues*

S-so to, uh, summarise... these substances can have severe impacts on both the environment and the factory worker’s health.

And... oh, where is it?

*flutter*

*fling*

*shuffle*

*float*

Aha!

Um, so the point I’m trying to make is not so much that we shouldn’t use these substances...
REFERENCES


INTERNATIONAL AGENCY FOR RESEARCH ON CANCER (IARC) (1989) OCCUPATIONAL EXPOSURES IN PAINT MANUFACTURING AND PAINTING, IN IARC MONOGRAPHS ON THE EVALUATION OF CARCINOGENIC RISKS TO HUMANS: SOME ORGANIC SOLVENTS, RESIN MONOMERS AND RELATED COMPOUNDS, PIGMENTS AND OCCUPATIONAL EXPOSURES IN PAINT MANUFACTURING AND PAINTING, VOL. 47, FRANCE, IARC: 327-442.
