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| How to respond to customers who might be misusing solvents |
| A guide for retailers |
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The following statements could be used to respond to customers who retailers suspect might be misusing solvents.

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| **Customer says or does** | **Retailer says or does** |
| You can’t refuse to sell to me. I’ll have you up for discrimination.  | We’re sorry but we do have the right not to sell this product.  |
| You have to sell to me; I’m over 18 years old.  | We’ve been told the law covers all age groups and we have to comply with the law or we can be prosecuted.  |
| My mother has sent me up for three cans of spray paint.  | We’d like to help but you will need to bring your mother/father or an adult in with you. This company has a policy not to sell this product to young people.  |
| I have a letter from my mother so it’s OK for me to buy it.  | As above.  |
| You may as well sell it to me or I’ll just go up the street and buy it.  | The government has advised us to restrict sales of this product to young people. We think you will find the same response in that store. Ring the manager of the store mentioned and discuss your concerns with him/her.  |
| This [product] will not do any harm. It’s not one of those things that kids sniff.  | We’re sorry but that’s one of the products that the government has asked us not to sell because of the harm it can cause if used incorrectly.  |
| Why won’t you sell it to me? You’ve just sold to the guy in front of me?  | Focus on the difference between the customers, such as their age, when making a decision.  |
| Groups of teenagers standing around areas where solvent products are displayed.  | Ask if you can help them. If they do not want to purchase ask them politely to move on. If they refuse, call the manager or store security.  |

Other tips for dealing with customers who might be misusing solvents include:

1. Remain calm and friendly. It’s best not to argue with customers; just firmly restate the company policy. Most customers will accept this approach and leave the store.
2. Use ‘we’ not ‘I’. Don’t take direct responsibility for this policy. Telling a customer ‘we can’t sell you this product’ indicates that it is a management or government decision. This makes it harder for the purchaser to blame the individual salesperson.
3. Take threats of violence seriously. If there is any threat or fear of violence, it is best not to refuse to sell. If you believe that somebody could be injured because you have refused to sell a product, then comply with their wishes and call the manager and/or the police.
4. Ensure safety first. If a customer appears intoxicated, exercise caution and remember the safety of all customers and staff is the first priority.