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## SOLVENTS AND ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION DEVICES

Can you imagine leaving your home without your mobile phone in your pocket or handbag? And how would your ordinary working day be without being able to use a PC or laptop? Mobile communications are all around us and have completely transformed our lives. But few of us realise that many of these modern technologies simply could not exist if it weren't for solvents.

### SCREEN-CLEANING FLUID

Fingerprints or smudges on computer screens are not just irritating, but can also cause visual problems for the user. To use your computer in the best possible conditions, the screen needs to be cleaned regularly. Isopropyl alcohol is a solvent that dissolves a wide range of stains, including fingerprints, and evaporates quickly, making it ideal for use in cleaning fluids for computer monitor screens, as well as LCD screens, CDs and DVDs.

### COATINGS

Owning a laptop and/or a smart phone has become the norm for most European citizens. These days, consumers often look for ways to customise their mobile devices, by buying a smart phone in a specific colour, for example, or by regularly changing its appearance with removable covers. These glossy coatings are produced using solvents such as methyl ethyl ketone or ethyl acetate. Solvents are key to creating the desired viscosity for the application of paints and coatings. Once applied, the solvent evaporates, allowing the resin and pigments to form a protective and decorative film, which dries rapidly.

### MICROCHIPS

Microchips are the basis of all modern technological devices. Without them, laptops, smart phones or hands-free kits simply could not exist. Metal ions can cause short circuits that result in 'bad' microchips, which is why the microelectronics industry uses electronic-grade solvents. These solvents have extremely low levels of metal ions, and help to produce and clean micro-circuitry, while at the same time minimising microchip failures and short circuits. Dimethyl sulfoxide is used to dissolve organic compounds, which allows its use as a solvent for photoresist stripper formulations in microchip processes.

### PRINTED CIRCUIT BOARD (PCB)

The printed circuit board (PCB) is a fundamental component of all electronic devices. It mechanically supports and electronically connects a device's electronic components. PCBs are made of thin copper foil, which ensures that they are able to conduct electricity. Extracting the copper from its ores involves a series of processes, some of which involve the use of solvents. In solvent extraction plants, aliphatic hydrocarbon solvents are used as carriers for chemical extractants, allowing for concentration and purification of the copper to the desired level.

