



# Right to Know Hazardous Substance Fact Sheet

Common Name: **ACETONITRILE**

Synonyms: Methyl Cyanide; Cyanomethane

Chemical Name: Acetonitrile

Date: June 1998

Revision: April 2008

CAS Number: 75-05-8

RTK Substance Number: 0008

DOT Number: UN 1648

## Description and Use

**Acetonitrile** is a colorless liquid with an *Ether*-like odor. It is used as a solvent, and in making pesticides, pharmaceuticals, batteries and rubber products.

### ▶ ODOR THRESHOLD=98 ppm

- ▶ Odor thresholds vary greatly. Do not rely on odor alone to determine potentially hazardous exposures.

## Reasons for Citation

- ▶ **Acetonitrile** is on the Right to Know Hazardous Substance List because it is cited by OSHA, ACGIH, DOT, NIOSH, DEP, IRIS, NFPA and EPA.
- ▶ This chemical is on the Special Health Hazard Substance List.

[SEE GLOSSARY ON PAGE 5.](#)

## FIRST AID

### Eye Contact

- ▶ Immediately flush with large amounts of water for at least 15 minutes, lifting upper and lower lids. Remove contact lenses, if worn, while rinsing.

### Skin Contact

- ▶ Quickly remove contaminated clothing. Immediately wash contaminated skin with large amounts of soap and water. Seek medical attention.

### Inhalation

- ▶ Remove the person from exposure.
- ▶ Begin rescue breathing (using universal precautions) if breathing has stopped and CPR if heart action has stopped.
- ▶ Transfer promptly to a medical facility.

### Antidotes and Special Procedures

- ▶ Use *Amyl Nitrite* capsules if symptoms develop. All area employees should be trained regularly in emergency treatment of *Cyanide* poisoning and in CPR. A *Cyanide* antidote kit **MUST** be rapidly available and ingredients replaced every 1 to 2 years to ensure freshness.

## EMERGENCY NUMBERS

Poison Control: 1-800-222-1222

CHEMTREC: 1-800-424-9300

NJDEP Hotline: 1-877-927-6337

National Response Center: 1-800-424-8802

**EMERGENCY RESPONDERS >>>> SEE BACK PAGE**

## Hazard Summary

Hazard Rating	NJDOH	NFPA
<b>HEALTH</b>	-	2
<b>FLAMMABILITY</b>	-	3
<b>REACTIVITY</b>	-	0
FLAMMABLE POISONOUS GASES ARE PRODUCED IN FIRE CONTAINERS MAY EXPLODE IN FIRE		

*Hazard Rating Key: 0=minimal; 1=slight; 2=moderate; 3=serious; 4=severe*

- ▶ **Acetonitrile** can affect you when inhaled and by passing through the skin.
- ▶ **Acetonitrile** may cause reproductive damage. **HANDLE WITH EXTREME CAUTION.**
- ▶ Contact can irritate the skin and eyes.
- ▶ Inhaling **Acetonitrile** can irritate the nose, throat and lungs.
- ▶ Exposure can cause *Cyanide poisoning*. Symptoms include flushing of the face, chest tightness, headache, nausea and vomiting, weakness and shortness of breath, and may lead to death.
- ▶ Repeated exposure may affect the liver, kidneys, nervous system and thyroid gland.
- ▶ **Acetonitrile** is a **FLAMMABLE LIQUID** and a **DANGEROUS FIRE HAZARD**.

## Workplace Exposure Limits

OSHA: The legal airborne permissible exposure limit (PEL) is **40 ppm** averaged over an 8-hour workshift.

NIOSH: The recommended airborne exposure limit (REL) is **20 ppm** averaged over a 10-hour workshift.

ACGIH: The threshold limit value (TLV) is **20 ppm** averaged over an 8-hour workshift.

- ▶ The above exposure limits are for air levels only. When skin contact also occurs, you may be overexposed, even though air levels are less than the limits listed above.

## Determining Your Exposure

- ▶ Read the product manufacturer's Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) and the label to determine product ingredients and important safety and health information about the product mixture.
- ▶ For each individual hazardous ingredient, read the New Jersey Department of Health Hazardous Substance Fact Sheet, available on the RTK website ([www.nj.gov/health/eoh/rtkweb](http://www.nj.gov/health/eoh/rtkweb)) or in your facility's RTK Central File or Hazard Communication Standard file.
- ▶ You have a right to this information under the New Jersey Worker and Community Right to Know Act, the Public Employees Occupational Safety and Health (PEOSH) Act if you are a public worker in New Jersey, and under the federal Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA) if you are a private worker.
- ▶ The New Jersey Right to Know Act requires most employers to label chemicals in the workplace and requires public employers to provide their employees with information concerning chemical hazards and controls. The federal OSHA Hazard Communication Standard (29 CFR 1910.1200) and the PEOSH Hazard Communication Standard (N.J.A.C. 12:100-7) require employers to provide similar information and training to their employees.

This Fact Sheet is a summary of available information regarding the health hazards that may result from exposure. Duration of exposure, concentration of the substance and other factors will affect your susceptibility to any of the potential effects described below.

## Health Hazard Information

### Acute Health Effects

The following acute (short-term) health effects may occur immediately or shortly after exposure to **Acetonitrile**:

- ▶ Contact can irritate the skin and eyes.
- ▶ Inhaling **Acetonitrile** can irritate the nose, throat and lungs.
- ▶ Exposure can cause *Cyanide poisoning*. Symptoms include flushing of the face, chest tightness, headache, nausea and vomiting, weakness and shortness of breath, and may lead to death.

### Chronic Health Effects

The following chronic (long-term) health effects can occur at some time after exposure to **Acetonitrile** and can last for months or years:

### Cancer Hazard

- ▶ While **Acetonitrile** has been tested, it is not classifiable as to its potential to cause cancer.

### Reproductive Hazard

- ▶ **Acetonitrile** may cause reproductive damage.

### Other Effects

- ▶ **Acetonitrile** may affect the liver, kidneys and nervous system.
- ▶ Repeated exposure may affect the thyroid gland, causing enlargement.

## Medical

### Medical Testing

For frequent or potentially high exposure (half the TLV or greater), the following are recommended before beginning work and at regular times after that:

- ▶ Lung function tests

If symptoms develop or overexposure is suspected, the following are recommended:

- ▶ Blood *Cyanide* and urine *Thiocyanate* levels. Elevated levels indicate overexposure.
- ▶ Evaluation of thyroid function
- ▶ Liver and kidney function tests
- ▶ Exam of the nervous system

Any evaluation should include a careful history of past and present symptoms with an exam. Medical tests that look for damage already done are not a substitute for controlling exposure.

Request copies of your medical testing. You have a legal right to this information under the OSHA Access to Employee Exposure and Medical Records Standard (29 CFR 1910.1020).

### Mixed Exposures

- ▶ More than light alcohol consumption may cause liver damage. Drinking alcohol may increase the liver damage caused by **Acetonitrile**.

## Workplace Controls and Practices

Very toxic chemicals, or those that are reproductive hazards or sensitizers, require expert advice on control measures if a less toxic chemical cannot be substituted. Control measures include: (1) enclosing chemical processes for severely irritating and corrosive chemicals, (2) using local exhaust ventilation for chemicals that may be harmful with a single exposure, and (3) using general ventilation to control exposures to skin and eye irritants. For further information on workplace controls, consult the NIOSH document on Control Banding at [www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/ctrlbanding/](http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/ctrlbanding/).

The following work practices are also recommended:

- ▶ Label process containers.
- ▶ Provide employees with hazard information and training.
- ▶ Monitor airborne chemical concentrations.
- ▶ Use engineering controls if concentrations exceed recommended exposure levels.
- ▶ Provide eye wash fountains and emergency showers.
- ▶ Wash or shower if skin comes in contact with a hazardous material.
- ▶ Always wash at the end of the workshift.
- ▶ Change into clean clothing if clothing becomes contaminated.
- ▶ Do not take contaminated clothing home.
- ▶ Get special training to wash contaminated clothing.
- ▶ Do not eat, smoke, or drink in areas where chemicals are being handled, processed or stored.
- ▶ Wash hands carefully before eating, smoking, drinking, applying cosmetics or using the toilet.

In addition, the following may be useful or required:

- ▶ Before entering a confined space where **Acetonitrile** may be present, check to make sure that an explosive concentration does not exist.

## Personal Protective Equipment

The OSHA Personal Protective Equipment Standard (29 CFR 1910.132) requires employers to determine the appropriate personal protective equipment for each hazard and to train employees on how and when to use protective equipment.

The following recommendations are only guidelines and may not apply to every situation.

### Gloves and Clothing

- ▶ Avoid skin contact with **Acetonitrile**. Wear personal protective equipment made from material that can not be permeated or degraded by this substance. Safety equipment suppliers and manufacturers can provide recommendations on the most protective glove and clothing material for your operation.
- ▶ Safety equipment manufacturers recommend *Butyl*, *Silver Shield®/4H®* and *Viton/Butyl* for gloves and *DuPont CPF 4, BR, LV, Responder®, CSM* and *TK; Kappler® Zytron® 500;* and *Saint-Gobain ONESuit® TEC*, or the equivalent, as protective materials for clothing.
- ▶ All protective clothing (suits, gloves, footwear, headgear) should be clean, available each day, and put on before work.

### Eye Protection

- ▶ Wear indirect-vent, impact and splash resistant goggles when working with liquids.
- ▶ Wear a face shield along with goggles when working with corrosive, highly irritating or toxic substances.

### Respiratory Protection

**Improper use of respirators is dangerous.** Respirators should only be used if the employer has implemented a written program that takes into account workplace conditions, requirements for worker training, respirator fit testing, and medical exams, as described in the OSHA Respiratory Protection Standard (29 CFR 1910.134).

- ▶ Where the potential exists for exposure over **20 ppm**, use a NIOSH approved full facepiece respirator with an organic vapor cartridge. Increased protection is obtained from full facepiece powered-air purifying respirators.
- ▶ Leave the area immediately if (1) while wearing a filter or cartridge respirator you can smell, taste, or otherwise detect **Acetonitrile**, (2) while wearing particulate filters abnormal resistance to breathing is experienced, or (3) eye irritation occurs while wearing a full facepiece respirator. Check to make sure the respirator-to-face seal is still good. If it is, replace the filter or cartridge. If the seal is no longer good, you may need a new respirator.
- ▶ Consider all potential sources of exposure in your workplace. You may need a combination of filters, prefilters or cartridges to protect against different forms of a chemical (such as vapor and mist) or against a mixture of chemicals.
- ▶ Where the potential exists for exposure over **200 ppm**, use a NIOSH approved supplied-air respirator with a full facepiece operated in a pressure-demand or other positive-pressure mode. For increased protection use in combination with an auxiliary self-contained breathing apparatus operated in a pressure-demand or other positive-pressure mode.
- ▶ Exposure to **500 ppm** is immediately dangerous to life and health. If the possibility of exposure above **500 ppm** exists, use a NIOSH approved self-contained breathing apparatus with a full facepiece operated in a pressure-demand or other positive-pressure mode equipped with an emergency escape air cylinder.

## Fire Hazards

If employees are expected to fight fires, they must be trained and equipped as stated in the OSHA Fire Brigades Standard (29 CFR 1910.156).

- ▶ **Acetonitrile** is a FLAMMABLE LIQUID.
- ▶ Use dry chemical, CO<sub>2</sub>, or alcohol-resistant foam as extinguishing agents, as water may not be effective in fighting fires.
- ▶ POISONOUS GASES ARE PRODUCED IN FIRE, including *Hydrogen Cyanide*.
- ▶ CONTAINERS MAY EXPLODE IN FIRE.
- ▶ Use water spray to keep fire-exposed containers cool.
- ▶ Vapors may travel to a source of ignition and flash back.
- ▶ Vapor is heavier than air and may travel a distance to cause a fire or explosion far from the source.

### Spills and Emergencies

If employees are required to clean-up spills, they must be properly trained and equipped. The OSHA Hazardous Waste Operations and Emergency Response Standard (29 CFR 1910.120) may apply.

If **Acetonitrile** is spilled or leaked, take the following steps:

- ▶ Evacuate personnel and secure and control entrance to the area.
- ▶ Eliminate all ignition sources.
- ▶ Absorb liquids in vermiculite, dry sand, earth, or a similar material and deposit in sealed containers.
- ▶ Use water spray to keep tanks cool.
- ▶ Ventilate and wash area after clean-up is complete.
- ▶ Keep **Acetonitrile** out of confined spaces, such as sewers, because of the possibility of an explosion.
- ▶ It may be necessary to contain and dispose of **Acetonitrile** as a HAZARDOUS WASTE. Contact your state Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) or your regional office of the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for specific recommendations.

### Handling and Storage

Prior to working with **Acetonitrile** you should be trained on its proper handling and storage.

- ▶ **Acetonitrile** reacts violently with OXIDIZING AGENTS (such as PERCHLORATES, PEROXIDES, PERMANGANATES, CHLORATES, NITRATES, CHLORINE, BROMINE and FLUORINE).
- ▶ **Acetonitrile** is not compatible with STRONG ACIDS (such as HYDROCHLORIC, SULFURIC and NITRIC); STRONG BASES (such as SODIUM HYDROXIDE and POTASSIUM HYDROXIDE); REDUCING AGENTS (such as LITHIUM, SODIUM, ALUMINUM and their HYDRIDES); ALKALI METALS (such as POTASSIUM); NITRATING AGENTS; IRON SALTS of PERCHLORATE; NITROGEN-FLUORINE COMPOUNDS; CHLOROSULFONIC ACID; INDIDIUM; PERFLUOROUREA; and SULFUR and NITROGEN TRIOXIDES.
- ▶ May react with WATER, MOISTURE and STEAM to form toxic and flammable vapors.
- ▶ Store in tightly closed containers in a cool, well-ventilated area.
- ▶ Sources of ignition, such as smoking and open flames, are prohibited where **Acetonitrile** is used, handled, or stored.
- ▶ Metal containers involving the transfer of **Acetonitrile** should be grounded and bonded.
- ▶ Use only non-sparking tools and equipment, especially when opening and closing containers of **Acetonitrile**.

### Occupational Health Information Resources

The New Jersey Department of Health offers multiple services in occupational health. These services include providing informational resources, educational materials, public presentations, and industrial hygiene and medical investigations and evaluations.

#### For more information, please contact:

New Jersey Department of Health  
Right to Know  
PO Box 368  
Trenton, NJ 08625-0368  
Phone: 609-984-2202  
Fax: 609-984-7407  
E-mail: [rtk@doh.state.nj.us](mailto:rtk@doh.state.nj.us)  
Web address: <http://www.nj.gov/health/eoh/rtkweb>

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are not intended to be copied and sold  
for commercial purposes.*

## GLOSSARY

**ACGIH** is the American Conference of Governmental Industrial Hygienists. They publish guidelines called Threshold Limit Values (TLVs) for exposure to workplace chemicals.

**Acute Exposure Guideline Levels** (AEGs) are established by the EPA. They describe the risk to humans resulting from once-in-a lifetime, or rare, exposure to airborne chemicals.

**Boiling point** is the temperature at which a substance can change its physical state from a liquid to a gas.

A **carcinogen** is a substance that causes cancer.

The **CAS number** is unique, identifying number, assigned by the Chemical Abstracts Service, to a specific chemical.

**CFR** is the Code of Federal Regulations, which are the regulations of the United States government.

A **combustible** substance is a solid, liquid or gas that will burn.

A **corrosive** substance is a gas, liquid or solid that causes destruction of human skin or severe corrosion of containers.

**DEP** is the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection.

**DOT** is the Department of Transportation, the federal agency that regulates the transportation of chemicals.

**EPA** is the Environmental Protection Agency, the federal agency responsible for regulating environmental hazards.

**ERG** is the Emergency Response Guidebook. It is a guide for emergency responders for transportation emergencies involving hazardous substances.

**Emergency Response Planning Guideline** (ERPG) values are intended to provide estimates of concentration ranges where one reasonably might anticipate observing adverse effects.

A **fetus** is an unborn human or animal.

A **flammable** substance is a solid, liquid, vapor or gas that will ignite easily and burn rapidly.

The **flash point** is the temperature at which a liquid or solid gives off vapor that can form a flammable mixture with air.

**IARC** is the International Agency for Research on Cancer, a scientific group.

**Ionization Potential** is the amount of energy needed to remove an electron from an atom or molecule. It is measured in electron volts.

**IRIS** is the Integrated Risk Information System database maintained by federal EPA. The database contains information on human health effects that may result from exposure to various chemicals in the environment.

**LEL or Lower Explosive Limit**, is the lowest concentration of a combustible substance (gas or vapor) in the air capable of continuing an explosion.

**mg/m<sup>3</sup>** means milligrams of a chemical in a cubic meter of air. It is a measure of concentration (weight/volume).

A **mutagen** is a substance that causes mutations. A **mutation** is a change in the genetic material in a body cell. Mutations can lead to birth defects, miscarriages, or cancer.

**NFPA** is the National Fire Protection Association. It classifies substances according to their fire and explosion hazard.

**NIOSH** is the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health. It tests equipment, evaluates and approves respirators, conducts studies of workplace hazards, and proposes standards to OSHA.

**NTP** is the National Toxicology Program which tests chemicals and reviews evidence for cancer.

**OSHA** is the federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration, which adopts and enforces health and safety standards.

**PEOSHA** is the New Jersey Public Employees Occupational Safety and Health Act, which adopts and enforces health and safety standards in public workplaces.

**Permeated** is the movement of chemicals through protective materials.

**PIH** is a DOT designation for chemicals which are Poison Inhalation Hazards.

**ppm** means parts of a substance per million parts of air. It is a measure of concentration by volume in air.

A **reactive** substance is a solid, liquid or gas that releases energy under certain conditions.

**STEL** is a Short Term Exposure Limit which is usually a 15-minute exposure that should not be exceeded at any time during a work day.

A **teratogen** is a substance that causes birth defects by damaging the fetus.

**UEL or Upper Explosive Limit** is the highest concentration in air above which there is too much fuel (gas or vapor) to begin a reaction or explosion.

**Vapor Density** is the ratio of the weight of a given volume of one gas to the weight of another (usually *Hydrogen*), at the same temperature and pressure.

The **vapor pressure** is a measure of how readily a liquid or a solid mixes with air at its surface. A higher vapor pressure indicates a higher concentration of the substance in air and therefore increases the likelihood of breathing it in.

Common Name: **ACETONITRILE**

Synonyms: Methyl Cyanide; Cyanomethane

CAS No: 75-05-8

Molecular Formula: C<sub>2</sub>H<sub>3</sub>N

RTK Substance No: 0008

Description: Colorless liquid with an *Ether*-like odor

### HAZARD DATA

Hazard Rating	Firefighting	Reactivity
<b>2 - Health</b> <b>3 - Fire</b> <b>0 - Reactivity</b> <b>DOT#:</b> UN 1648 <b>ERG Guide #:</b> 127 <b>Hazard Class:</b> 3 (Flammable)	<b>FLAMMABLE LIQUID</b> Use dry chemical, CO <sub>2</sub> , alcohol-resistant foam as extinguishing agents, as water may not be effective in fighting fires. <b>POISONOUS GASES ARE PRODUCED IN FIRE</b> , including <i>Hydrogen Cyanide</i> . <b>CONTAINERS MAY EXPLODE IN FIRE.</b> Use water spray to keep fire-exposed containers cool. Vapors may travel to a source of ignition and flash back.	<b>Acetonitrile</b> reacts violently with OXIDIZING AGENTS (such as PERCHLORATES, PEROXIDES, PERMANGANATES, CHLORATES, NITRATES, CHLORINE, BROMINE and FLUORINE). <b>Acetonitrile</b> is not compatible with STRONG ACIDS (such as HYDROCHLORIC, SULFURIC and NITRIC); STRONG BASES (such as SODIUM HYDROXIDE and POTASSIUM HYDROXIDE); REDUCING AGENTS (such as LITHIUM, SODIUM, ALUMINUM and their HYDRIDES); ALKALI METALS (such as POTASSIUM); NITRATING AGENTS; IRON SALTS of PERCHLORATE; NITROGEN-FLUORINE COMPOUNDS; CHLOROSULFONIC ACID; INDIUM; PERFLUOROUREA; and SULFUR and NITROGEN TRIOXIDES. May react with WATER, MOISTURE and STEAM to form toxic and flammable vapors.

### SPILL/LEAKS

#### Isolation Distance:

Small Spills: 50 meters (150 feet)

Large Spills: 300 meters (1,000 feet)

Fire: 800 meters (1/2 mile)

Absorb liquids in vermiculite, dry sand, earth, or a similar material and deposit in sealed containers.

Keep **Acetonitrile** out of confined spaces, such as sewers, because of the possibility of an explosion.

May be toxic to aquatic life at high levels.

### PHYSICAL PROPERTIES

<b>Odor Threshold:</b>	98 ppm
<b>Flash Point:</b>	42°F (6°C)
<b>LEL:</b>	3%
<b>UEL:</b>	16%
<b>Auto Ignition Temp:</b>	975°F (524°C)
<b>Vapor Density:</b>	1.42 (air = 1)
<b>Vapor Pressure:</b>	73 mm Hg at 68°F (20°C)
<b>Specific Gravity:</b>	0.8 (water = 1)
<b>Water Solubility:</b>	Miscible
<b>Boiling Point:</b>	179°F (82°C)
<b>Ionization Potential:</b>	12.2 eV
<b>Molecular Weight:</b>	41.1

### EXPOSURE LIMITS

**OSHA:** 40 ppm, 8-hr TWA

**NIOSH:** 20 ppm, 10-hr TWA

**ACGIH:** 20 ppm, 8-hr TWA

**IDLH:** 500 ppm

### PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

<b>Gloves:</b>	Butyl, Silver Shield®/4H® and Viton/Butyl (>8-hr breakthrough)
<b>Coveralls:</b>	DuPont CPF 4, BR, LV, Responder®, CSM and TK; Kappler® Zytron® 500; and Saint-Gobain ONESuit® TEC (>8-hr breakthrough)
<b>Respirator:</b>	>20 ppm - Supplied air

### HEALTH EFFECTS

<b>Eyes:</b>	Irritation
<b>Skin:</b>	Irritation
<b>Inhalation:</b>	Nose, throat and lung irritation Flushing of the face, chest tightness, headache, nausea and vomiting, weakness and shortness of breath

### FIRST AID AND DECONTAMINATION

**Remove** the person from exposure.

**Flush** eyes with large amounts of water for at least 15 minutes. Remove contact lenses, if worn, while rinsing.

**Quickly** remove contaminated clothing and wash contaminated skin with large amounts of soap and water. Seek medical attention.

**Begin** artificial respiration if breathing has stopped and CPR if necessary.

**Transfer** to a medical facility.

**Use** *Amyl Nitrite* capsules if symptoms develop.