



Right to Know Hazardous Substance Fact Sheet

Common Name: **NITROMETHANE**

Synonyms: Nitrocarbol

Chemical Name: Methane, Nitro-

Date: August 1999 Revision: February 2008

CAS Number: 75-52-5

RTK Substance Number: 1386

DOT Number: UN 1261

Description and Use

Nitromethane is a colorless, oily liquid with a mild disagreeable or fruity odor. It is used as a propellant, fuel additive, rocket fuel, and solvent, and in making dyes, textiles, pharmaceuticals, and explosives.

- ▶ **ODOR THRESHOLD = 3.5 ppm**
- ▶ Odor thresholds vary greatly. Do not rely on odor alone to determine potentially hazardous exposures.

Reasons for Citation

- ▶ **Nitromethane** is on the Right to Know Hazardous Substance List because it is cited by OSHA, ACGIH, DOT, NIOSH, NTP, IARC and NFPA.
- ▶ 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 water.

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.

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
HEALTH	-	2
FLAMMABILITY	-	3
REACTIVITY	-	4
CARCINOGEN FLAMMABLE AND REACTIVE POISONOUS GASES ARE PRODUCED IN FIRE CONTAINERS MAY EXPLODE IN FIRE		

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

- ▶ **Nitromethane** can affect you when inhaled.
- ▶ **Nitromethane** should be handled as a CARCINOGEN-- WITH EXTREME CAUTION.
- ▶ Contact can irritate the skin and eyes.
- ▶ Inhaling **Nitromethane** can irritate the nose, throat and lungs.
- ▶ **Nitromethane** can cause nausea, vomiting and diarrhea.
- ▶ **Nitromethane** may cause headache, weakness and loss of coordination.
- ▶ High levels of this substance can reduce the blood's ability to transport *Oxygen*, causing headache, fatigue, dizziness, and a blue color to the skin and lips (*methemoglobinemia*). Exposure to very high levels can cause trouble breathing, collapse and even death.
- ▶ **Nitromethane** may damage the liver and kidneys.
- ▶ **Nitromethane** is FLAMMABLE and REACTIVE and a DANGEROUS FIRE and EXPLOSION HAZARD.

Workplace Exposure Limits

OSHA: The legal airborne permissible exposure limit (PEL) is **100 ppm** averaged over an 8-hour workshift.

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

- ▶ **Nitromethane** may be a CARCINOGEN in humans. There may be no safe level of exposure to a carcinogen, so all contact should be reduced to the lowest possible level.

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) 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 **Nitromethane**:

- ▶ Contact can irritate the skin and eyes.
- ▶ Inhaling **Nitromethane** can irritate the nose and throat causing coughing and wheezing.
- ▶ **Nitromethane** can cause nausea, vomiting and diarrhea.
- ▶ **Nitromethane** may cause headache, weakness and loss of coordination.
- ▶ High levels of this substance can reduce the blood's ability to transport *Oxygen*, causing headache, fatigue, dizziness, and a blue color to the skin and lips (*methemoglobinemia*). Exposure to very high levels can cause trouble breathing, collapse and even death.

Chronic Health Effects

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

Cancer Hazard

- ▶ **Nitromethane** may be a CARCINOGEN in humans since it has been shown to cause liver, lung and glandular cancer in animals.
- ▶ Many scientists believe there is no safe level of exposure to a carcinogen.

Reproductive Hazard

- ▶ While **Nitromethane** has been tested, further testing is required to assess its potential to cause reproductive harm.

Other Effects

- ▶ **Nitromethane** can irritate the lungs. Repeated exposure may cause bronchitis to develop with coughing, phlegm, and/or shortness of breath.
- ▶ **Nitromethane** may damage the liver and kidneys.
- ▶ Prolonged or repeated exposure can cause drying and cracking of the skin with redness.

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:

- ▶ Liver and kidney function tests
- ▶ Blood methemoglobin level

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

- ▶ Smoking can cause heart disease, lung cancer, emphysema, and other respiratory problems. It may worsen respiratory conditions caused by chemical exposure. Even if you have smoked for a long time, stopping now will reduce your risk of developing health problems.
- ▶ More than light alcohol consumption can cause liver damage. Drinking alcohol may increase the liver damage caused by **Nitromethane**.

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/.

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 **Nitromethane** 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 **Nitromethane**. Wear personal protective equipment made from material which 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* and *Silver Shield®/4H®* for gloves and DuPont *Tychem® BR*, *LV*, *CSM*, *Responder®*, and *TK*; Kappler *Zytron® 300*; and Saint-Gobain *ONESuit®/TEC*, or equivalent, as protective materials for clothing.

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.
- ▶ Do not wear contact lenses when working with this substance.

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 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 **750 ppm** is immediately dangerous to life and health. If the possibility of exposure above **750 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).

- ▶ **Nitromethane** is a FLAMMABLE LIQUID.
- ▶ Use CO₂, water spray or alcohol-resistant foam as extinguishing agents.
- ▶ DO NOT use dry chemical extinguishers on a fire.
- ▶ **Nitromethane** may explosively decompose from SHOCK, FRICTION or CONCUSSION.
- ▶ POISONOUS GASES ARE PRODUCED IN FIRE, including *Nitrogen Oxides*.
- ▶ CONTAINERS MAY EXPLODE IN FIRE.
- ▶ Use water spray to keep fire-exposed containers cool.
- ▶ Vapor is heavier than air and may travel a distance to cause a fire or explosion far from the source.
- ▶ **Nitromethane** may ignite combustibles (wood, paper and oil).

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 **Nitromethane** 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. DO NOT use sawdust or other combustible materials.
- ▶ Ventilate and wash area after clean-up is complete.
- ▶ Keep **Nitromethane** out of confined spaces, such as sewers, because of the possibility of an explosion.
- ▶ It may be necessary to contain and dispose of **Nitromethane** 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 **Nitromethane** you should be trained on its proper handling and storage.

- ▶ **Nitromethane** is unstable and SHOCK, FRICTION or ELEVATED TEMPERATURES can cause explosive decomposition, especially when confined.
- ▶ **Nitromethane** reacts violently with OXIDIZING AGENTS (such as PERCHLORATES, PEROXIDES, PERMANGANATES, CHLORATES, NITRATES, CHLORINE, BROMINE and FLUORINE); STRONG BASES (such as SODIUM HYDROXIDE and POTASSIUM HYDROXIDE); ALKYL METAL HALIDES (such as SODIUM CHLORIDE and LITHIUM BROMIDE); DIETHYL ALUMINUM BROMIDE; METHYL ZINC IODIDE; AMMONIA HYDROXIDE; CALCIUM HYPOCHLORITE; FORMALDEHYDE; and many other substances.
- ▶ **Nitromethane** forms shock-sensitive mixtures with AMINES; STRONG ACIDS (such as HYDROCHLORIC, SULFURIC and NITRIC); ACETONE; ALUMINUM POWDER; COPPER; COPPER ALLOYS; and LEAD and LEAD ALLOYS.
- ▶ Store in tightly closed containers in a cool, well-ventilated area away from STEEL.
- ▶ Sources of ignition, such as smoking and open flames, are prohibited where **Nitromethane** is used, handled, or stored.
- ▶ Metal containers involving the transfer of **Nitromethane** should be grounded and bonded.
- ▶ Use explosion-proof electrical equipment and fittings wherever **Nitromethane** is used, handled, manufactured, or stored.
- ▶ Use only non-sparking tools and equipment, especially when opening and closing containers of **Nitromethane**.

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
 Web address: <http://www.nj.gov/health/eoh/rtkweb>

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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/m³ 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: **NITROMETHANE**

Synonyms: Nitrocarbol

CAS No: 75-52-5

Molecular Formula: CH₃NO₂

RTK Substance No: 1386

Description: Colorless, oily liquid with a mild disagreeable or fruity odor

HAZARD DATA

Hazard Rating	Firefighting	Reactivity
<p>2 - Health</p> <p>3 - Fire</p> <p>4 - Reactivity</p> <p>DOT#: UN 1261</p> <p>ERG Guide #: 129</p> <p>Hazard Class: 3 (Flammable)</p>	<p>Nitromethane is a FLAMMABLE LIQUID. Use CO₂, water spray or alcohol-resistant foam as extinguishing agents. DO NOT use dry chemical extinguishers on a fire. Nitromethane may explosively decompose from SHOCK, FRICTION or CONCUSSION. POISONOUS GASES ARE PRODUCED IN FIRE, including <i>Nitrogen Oxides</i>. CONTAINERS MAY EXPLODE IN FIRE. Use water spray to keep fire-exposed containers cool. Vapor is heavier than air and may travel a distance to cause a fire or explosion far from the source. Nitromethane may ignite combustibles (wood, paper and oil).</p>	<p>Nitromethane is unstable and SHOCK; FRICTION or ELEVATED TEMPERATURES can cause explosive decomposition, especially when confined.</p> <p>Nitromethane reacts violently with OXIDIZING AGENTS (such as PERCHLORATES, PEROXIDES, PERMANGANATES, CHLORATES, NITRATES, CHLORINE, BROMINE and FLUORINE); STRONG BASES (such as SODIUM HYDROXIDE and POTASSIUM HYDROXIDE); ALKYL METAL HALIDES (such as SODIUM CHLORIDE and LITHIUM BROMIDE); DIETHYL ALUMINUM BROMIDE; METHYL ZINC IODIDE; AMMONIA HYDROXIDE; CALCIUM HYPOCHLORITE; FORMALDEHYDE, and many other substances.</p> <p>Nitromethane forms shock-sensitive mixtures with AMINES; STRONG ACIDS (such as HYDROCHLORIC, SULFURIC and NITRIC); ACETONE; ALUMINUM POWDER; COPPER; COPPER ALLOYS; and LEAD and LEAD ALLOYS.</p>

SPILL/LEAKS

Isolation Distance:

Small Spills: 60 meters (200 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 **Nitromethane** out of confined spaces, such as sewers, because of the possibility of an explosion.

Does not accumulate in aquatic life.

PHYSICAL PROPERTIES

Odor Threshold:	3.5 ppm
Flash Point:	95°F (35°C)
LEL:	7.3%
UEL:	62%
Auto Ignition Temp:	785°F (418°C)
Vapor Density:	2.1 (air = 1)
Vapor Pressure:	27.8 mm Hg at 68°F (20°C)
Specific Gravity:	1.14 (water = 1)
Water Solubility:	Slightly soluble
Boiling Point:	214°F (101°C)
Ionization Potential:	11.08 eV
Molecular Weight:	61

EXPOSURE LIMITS

OSHA: 100 ppm, 8-hr TWA

ACGIH: 20 ppm, 8-hr TWA

IDLH: 750 ppm

PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

Gloves:	Butyl and Silver Shield®/4H® (>8-hr breakthrough)
Coveralls:	DuPont Tychem® BR, LV, CSM, Responder®, and TK; Kappler Zytron® 300; and Saint-Gobain ONESuit®TEC (>8-hr breakthrough)
Respirator:	>20 ppm - Supplied air

HEALTH EFFECTS

Eyes:	Irritation
Skin:	Irritation with drying, cracking and redness
Inhalation:	Nose, throat and lung irritation with coughing, wheezing and shortness of breath Headache, weakness, dizziness, nausea and vomiting
Chronic:	Cancer (liver, lung, glandular) in animals

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.
Quickly remove contaminated clothing and wash contaminated skin with large amounts of water.
Begin artificial respiration if breathing has stopped and CPR if necessary.
Transfer to a medical facility.