



New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services

# HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCE FACT SHEET

Common Name: **PROPYL ALCOHOL**

CAS Number: 71-23-8  
DOT Number: UN 1274

RTK Substance number: 1605  
Date: May 1989 Revision: May 1997

## HAZARD SUMMARY

- \* **Propyl Alcohol** can affect you when breathed in and by passing through your skin.
- \* **Propyl Alcohol** should be handled as a **CARCINOGEN--WITH EXTREME CAUTION**.
- \* Contact can irritate the eyes and skin, causing a rash or burning feeling. Repeated skin exposure can cause drying and cracking of the skin.
- \* Breathing **Propyl Alcohol** can irritate the nose and throat.
- \* Exposure to high concentrations can cause headache, drowsiness, dizziness, confusion, nausea and vomiting.
- \* **Propyl Alcohol** may cause liver damage.
- \* **Propyl Alcohol** is a **FLAMMABLE LIQUID** and a **FIRE HAZARD**.

## IDENTIFICATION

**Propyl Alcohol** is a colorless liquid with a mild odor of alcohol. It is used in printing, making textile and leather products, and making other chemicals.

## REASON FOR CITATION

- \* **Propyl Alcohol** is on the Hazardous Substance List because it is regulated by OSHA and cited by ACGIH, DOT, NIOSH and NFPA.
- \* This chemical is on the Special Health Hazard Substance List because it is **FLAMMABLE**.
- \* Definitions are provided on page 5.

## HOW TO DETERMINE IF YOU ARE BEING EXPOSED

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 and training concerning chemical hazards and controls. The federal OSHA Hazard Communication Standard, 1910.1200, requires private employers to provide similar training and information to their employees.

- \* Exposure to hazardous substances should be routinely evaluated. This may include collecting air samples. Under OSHA 1910.20, you have a legal right to obtain copies of sampling results from you employer.

- \* If you think you are experiencing any work-related health problems, see a doctor trained to recognize occupational diseases. Take this Fact Sheet with you.
- \* **ODOR THRESHOLD = 5.3 ppm.**
- \* The range of accepted odor threshold values is quite broad. Caution should be used in relying on odor alone as a warning of potentially hazardous exposures.

## WORKPLACE EXPOSURE LIMITS

OSHA: The legal airborne permissible exposure limit (PEL) is **200 ppm** averaged over an 8-hour workshift and **250 ppm** not to be exceeded during any 15 minute work period.

NIOSH: The recommended airborne exposure limit is **200 ppm** averaged over a 10-hour workshift.

ACGIH The recommended airborne exposure limit is **200 ppm** averaged over an 8-hour workshift and **250 ppm** as a STEL (short term exposure limit).

- \* 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.
- \* **Propyl Alcohol** 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.

## WAYS OF REDUCING EXPOSURE

- \* Where possible, enclose operations and use local exhaust ventilation at the site of chemical release. If local exhaust ventilation or enclosure is not used, respirators should be worn.
- \* Wear protective work clothing.
- \* Wash thoroughly immediately after exposure to **Propyl Alcohol** and at the end of the workshift.
- \* Post hazard and warning information in the work area. In addition, as part of an ongoing education and training effort, communicate all information on the health and safety hazards of **Propyl Alcohol** to potentially exposed workers.

This Fact Sheet is a summary source of information of all potential and most severe 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.

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**HEALTH HAZARD INFORMATION**

**Acute Health Effects**

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

- \* Contact can irritate the eyes and skin, causing a rash or burning feeling.
- \* Breathing **Propyl Alcohol** can irritate the nose and throat.
- \* Exposure to high concentrations can cause headache, drowsiness, dizziness, confusion, nausea and vomiting.

**Chronic Health Effects**

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

**Cancer Hazard**

- \* **Propyl Alcohol** may be a CARCINOGEN in humans. It has been shown to cause liver carcinomas and sarcomas, spleen sarcomas, and leukemia in animals.
- \* Many scientists believe there is no safe level of exposure to a carcinogen. Such substances may also have the potential for causing reproductive damage in humans.

**Reproductive Hazard**

- \* According to the information presently available to the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services, **Propyl Alcohol** has not been tested for its ability to affect reproduction.

**Other Long-Term Effects**

- \* Repeated skin exposure can cause drying and cracking of the skin.
- \* **Propyl Alcohol** may cause liver damage.
- \* This chemical has not been adequately evaluated to determine whether brain or other nerve damage could occur with repeated exposure. However, many solvents and other petroleum-based chemicals have been shown to cause such damage. Effects may include reduced memory and concentration, personality changes (withdrawal, irritability), fatigue, sleep disturbances, reduced coordination, and/or effects on nerves supplying internal organs (autonomic nerves) and/or nerves to the arms and legs (weakness, "pins and needles").

**MEDICAL**

**Medical Testing**

If symptoms develop or overexposure is suspected, the following may be useful:

- \* Evaluate for brain effects such as changes in memory, concentration, sleeping patterns and mood (especially irritability and social withdrawal), as well as headaches and fatigue. Consider evaluations of the cerebellar, autonomic and peripheral nervous systems. Positive and borderline individuals should be referred for neuropsychological testing.
- \* Liver function tests.

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 OSHA 1910.20.

**WORKPLACE CONTROLS AND PRACTICES**

Unless a less toxic chemical can be substituted for a hazardous substance, **ENGINEERING CONTROLS** are the most effective way of reducing exposure. The best protection is to enclose operations and/or provide local exhaust ventilation at the site of chemical release. Isolating operations can also reduce exposure. Using respirators or protective equipment is less effective than the controls mentioned above, but is sometimes necessary.

In evaluating the controls present in your workplace, consider: (1) how hazardous the substance is, (2) how much of the substance is released into the workplace and (3) whether harmful skin or eye contact could occur. Special controls should be in place for highly toxic chemicals or when significant skin, eye, or breathing exposures are possible.

In addition, the following control is recommended:

- \* Where possible, automatically pump liquid **Propyl Alcohol** from drums or other storage containers to process containers.

Good **WORK PRACTICES** can help to reduce hazardous exposures. The following work practices are recommended:

- \* Workers whose clothing has been contaminated by **Propyl Alcohol** should change into clean clothing promptly.
- \* Contaminated work clothes should be laundered by individuals who have been informed of the hazards of exposure to **Propyl Alcohol**.
- \* Eye wash fountains should be provided in the immediate work area for emergency use.

- \* On skin contact with **Propyl Alcohol**, immediately wash or shower to remove the chemical. At the end of the workshift, wash any areas of the body that may have contacted **Propyl Alcohol**, whether or not known skin contact has occurred.
- \* Do not eat, smoke, or drink where **Propyl Alcohol** is handled, processed, or stored, since the chemical can be swallowed. Wash hands carefully before eating or smoking.

**PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT**

WORKPLACE CONTROLS ARE BETTER THAN PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT. However, for some jobs (such as outside work, confined space entry, jobs done only once in a while, or jobs done while workplace controls are being installed), personal protective equipment may be appropriate.

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

**Clothing**

- \* Avoid skin contact with **Propyl Alcohol**. Wear solvent-resistant gloves and clothing. Safety equipment suppliers/manufacturers can provide recommendations on the most protective glove/clothing material for your operation.
- \* All protective clothing (suits, gloves, footwear, headgear) should be clean, available each day, and put on before work.
- \* ACGIH recommends *Neoprene* or *Nitrile* as protective materials.

**Eye Protection**

- \* Wear splash-proof chemical goggles and face shield when working with liquid, unless full facepiece respiratory protection is worn.

**Respiratory Protection**

**IMPROPER USE OF RESPIRATORS IS DANGEROUS.** Such equipment should only be used if the employer has a written program that takes into account workplace conditions, requirements for worker training, respirator fit testing and medical exams, as described in OSHA 1910.134.

- \* Where the potential exists for exposures over **200 ppm**, use a MSHA/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 **800 ppm** is immediately dangerous to life and health. If the possibility of exposure above **800 ppm** exists, use a MSHA/NIOSH approved self contained breathing apparatus with a full facepiece operated in continuous flow or other positive pressure mode.

**HANDLING AND STORAGE**

- \* Prior to working with **Propyl Alcohol** you should be trained on its proper handling and storage.
- \* **Propyl Alcohol** must be stored to avoid contact with STRONG OXIDIZERS (such as CHLORINE and BROMINE) since violent reactions occur.
- \* Store in tightly closed containers in a cool, well-ventilated area away from HEAT.
- \* Sources of ignition such as smoking and open flames are prohibited where **Propyl Alcohol** is used, handled, or stored in a manner that could create a potential fire or explosion hazard.
- \* Metal containers involving the transfer of **Propyl Alcohol** should be grounded and bonded.
- \* Wherever **Propyl Alcohol** is used, handled, manufactured, or stored, use explosion-proof electrical equipment and fittings.

**QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

- Q: If I have acute health effects, will I later get chronic health effects?
- A: Not always. Most chronic (long-term) effects result from repeated exposures to a chemical.
- Q: Can I get long-term effects without ever having short-term effects?
- A: Yes, because long-term effects can occur from repeated exposures to a chemical at levels not high enough to make you immediately sick.
- Q: What are my chances of getting sick when I have been exposed to chemicals?
- A: The likelihood of becoming sick from chemicals is increased as the amount of exposure increases. This is determined by the length of time and the amount of material to which someone is exposed.
- Q: When are higher exposures more likely?
- A: Conditions which increase risk of exposure include physical and mechanical processes (heating, pouring, spraying, spills and evaporation from large surface areas such as open containers), and "confined space" exposures (working inside vats, reactors, boilers, small rooms, etc.).

- Q: Is the risk of getting sick higher for workers than for community residents?
- A: Yes. Exposures in the community, except possibly in cases of fires or spills, are usually much lower than those found in the workplace. However, people in the community may be exposed to contaminated water as well as to chemicals in the air over long periods. Because of this, and because of exposure of children or people who are already ill, community exposures may cause health problems.
- Q: Don't all chemicals cause cancer?
- A: No. Most chemicals tested by scientists are not cancer-causing.
- Q: Should I be concerned if a chemical causes cancer in animals?
- A: Yes. Most scientists agree that a chemical that causes cancer in animals should be treated as a suspected human carcinogen unless proven otherwise.
- Q: But don't they test animals using much higher levels of a chemical than people usually are exposed to?
- A: Yes. That's so effects can be seen more clearly using fewer animals. But high doses alone don't cause cancer unless it's a cancer agent. In fact, a chemical that causes cancer in animals at high doses could cause cancer in humans exposed to low doses.

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The following information is available from:

New Jersey Department of Health and  
Senior Services  
Occupational Disease and Injury Services  
Trenton, NJ 08625-0360  
(609) 984-1863

**Industrial Hygiene Information**

Industrial hygienists are available to answer your questions regarding the control of chemical exposures using exhaust ventilation, special work practices, good housekeeping, good hygiene practices, and personal protective equipment including respirators. In addition, they can help to interpret the results of industrial hygiene survey data.

**Medical Evaluation**

If you think you are becoming sick because of exposure to chemicals at your workplace, you may call a Department of Health and Senior Services physician who can help you find the services you need.

**Public Presentations**

Presentations and educational programs on occupational health or the Right to Know Act can be organized for labor unions, trade associations and other groups.

**Right to Know Information Resources**

The Right to Know Infoline (609) 984-2202 can answer questions about the identity and potential health effects of chemicals, list of educational materials in occupational health, references used to prepare the Fact Sheets, preparation of the Right to Know survey, education and training programs, labeling requirements, and general information regarding the Right to Know Act. Violations of the law should be reported to (609) 984-2202.

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## DEFINITIONS

**ACGIH** is the American Conference of Governmental Industrial Hygienists. It recommends upper limits (called TLVs) for exposure to workplace chemicals.

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

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

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

A **corrosive** substance is a gas, liquid or solid that causes irreversible damage to human tissue or 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.

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.

**HHAG** is the Human Health Assessment Group of the federal EPA.

**IARC** is the International Agency for Research on Cancer, a scientific group that classifies chemicals according to their cancer-causing potential.

A **miscible** substance is a liquid or gas that will evenly dissolve in another.

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

**MSHA** is the Mine Safety and Health Administration, the federal agency that regulates mining. It also evaluates and approves respirators.

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.

**NAERG** is the North American Emergency Response Guidebook. It was jointly developed by Transport Canada, the United States Department of Transportation and the Secretariat of Communications and Transportation of Mexico. It is a guide for first responders to quickly identify the specific or generic hazards of material involved in a transportation incident, and to protect themselves and the general public during the initial response phase of the incident.

**NCI** is the National Cancer Institute, a federal agency that determines the cancer-causing potential of chemicals.

**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 Occupational Safety and Health Administration, which adopts and enforces health and safety standards.

**PEOSHA** is the Public Employees Occupational Safety and Health Act, a state law which sets PELs for New Jersey public employees.

**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.

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

**TLV** is the Threshold Limit Value, the workplace exposure limit recommended by ACGIH.

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.

