Common Name: **OSMIUM TETROXIDE**  

CAS Number: 20816-12-0  
DOT Number: UN 2471

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**HAZARD SUMMARY**

* Osmium Tetroxide can affect you when breathed in.
* Skin contact can cause irritation, burns and rash.
* The odor can irritate the nose, throat and lungs causing wheezing, nosebleeds, cough, tightness in the chest, sore throat and hoarseness.
* Osmium Tetroxide can severely irritate and burn the eyes causing redness and swelling of the eyes, blurred vision, and may lead to permanent vision loss.
* Osmium Tetroxide may damage the kidneys.

**IDENTIFICATION**

Osmium Tetroxide is a colorless to pale yellow solid with a strong, unpleasant odor. It is used as a catalyst in chemical reactions, in photography, and in microscopic tissue staining.

**REASON FOR CITATION**

* Osmium Tetroxide is on the Hazardous Substance List because it is regulated by OSHA and cited by ACGIH, DOT, NIOSH, DEP and EPA.
* 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 personal and area air samples. You can obtain copies of sampling results from your employer. You have a legal right to this information under OSHA 1910.1020.
* 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.

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**WORKPLACE EXPOSURE LIMITS**

OSHA: The legal airborne permissible exposure limit (PEL) is 0.002 mg/m³ averaged over an 8-hour workshift.

NIOSH: The recommended airborne exposure limit is 0.002 mg/m³ averaged over a 10-hour workshift and 0.006 mg/m³, not to be exceeded during any 15 minute work period.

ACGIH: The recommended airborne exposure limit is 0.002 mg/m³ averaged over an 8-hour workshift and 0.006 mg/m³ as a STEL (short term exposure limit).

**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 Osmium Tetroxide 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 Osmium Tetroxide 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 Osmium Tetroxide:

* Skin contact can cause irritation, burns and rash, and a green to black stain on the skin.
* The odor can irritate the nose, throat and lungs causing wheezing, nosebleeds, cough, tightness in the chest, sore throat and hoarseness.
* Osmium Tetroxide can severely irritate and burn the eyes causing redness and swelling of the eyes, blurred vision, and may lead to permanent vision loss.

Chronic Health Effects
The following chronic (long-term) health effects can occur at some time after exposure to Osmium Tetroxide and can last for months or years:

Cancer Hazard
* Osmium Tetroxide may cause mutations (genetic changes). Whether or not it poses a cancer or reproductive hazard needs further study.

Reproductive Hazard
* According to the information presently available to the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services, Osmium Tetroxide has not been tested for its ability to affect reproduction.

Other Long-Term Effects
* Osmium Tetroxide can irritate the lungs. Repeated exposure may cause bronchitis to develop with cough, phlegm, and/or shortness of breath.
* Osmium Tetroxide may damage the kidneys.

MEDICAL

Medical Testing
Before beginning employment and at regular times after that, the following are recommended:

* Lung function tests.
* Complete eye exam.

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

* Kidney function tests.
* Chest x-ray.

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 1910.1020.

Mixed Exposures
* Because smoking can cause heart disease, as well as 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.

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 transfer Osmium Tetroxide 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 Osmium Tetroxide should change into clean clothing promptly.
* Do not take contaminated work clothes home. Family members could be exposed.
* Contaminated work clothes should be laundered by individuals who have been informed of the hazards of exposure to Osmium Tetroxide.
* Eye wash fountains should be provided in the immediate work area for emergency use.
* If there is the possibility of skin exposure, emergency shower facilities should be provided.
* On skin contact with Osmium Tetroxide, immediately wash or shower to remove the chemical. At the end of the workshift, wash any areas of the body that may have contacted Osmium Tetroxide, whether or not known skin contact has occurred.
* Do not eat, smoke, or drink where Osmium Tetroxide is handled, processed, or stored, since the chemical can be swallowed. Wash hands carefully before eating, drinking, smoking, or using the toilet.
* Use a vacuum or a wet method to reduce dust during clean-up. DO NOT DRY SWEEP.

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.

OSHA 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.

Clothing
* Avoid skin contact with Osmium Tetroxide. Wear protective 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.

Eye Protection
* Wear impact resistant eye protection with side shields or goggles.
* Wear a face shield along with goggles when working with corrosive, highly irritating or toxic substances.
* Contact lenses should not be worn when working with this substance.

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 exposure over 0.002 mg/m³, use a MSHA/NIOSH approved full facepiece respirator with a chemical cartridge specific for Osmium Tetroxide and particulate prefilters. Increased protection is obtained from full facepiece powered-air purifying respirators.
* If while wearing a filter or cartridge respirator you can smell, taste, or otherwise detect Osmium Tetroxide, or if while wearing particulate filters abnormal resistance to breathing is experienced, or eye irritation occurs while wearing a full facepiece respirator, leave the area immediately. 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.

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 dust releasing operations (grinding, mixing, blasting, dumping, etc.), other 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. This may be a problem for children or people who are already ill.

Q: What are the likely health problems from chemicals which cause mutations?

A: There are two primary health concerns associated with mutagens: (1) cancers can result from changes induced in cells and, (2) adverse reproductive and developmental outcomes can result from damage to the egg and sperm cells.

The following information is available from:

New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services
Occupational Health Service
PO Box 360
Trenton, NJ 08625-0360
(609) 984-1863
(609) 984-7407 (fax)

Web address: http://www.state.nj.us/health/eh/odisweb/

**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 personnel at the Department of Health and Senior Services, Occupational Health Service, who can help you find the information 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.
DEFINITIONS

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

A cancerogens 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/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.

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.

PEL is the Permissible Exposure Limit which is enforceable by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration.

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.

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.
Common Name: OSMIUM TETROXIDE
DOT Number: UN 2471
NAERG Code: 154
CAS Number: 20816-12-0

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DOES NOT BURN
POISONOUS GASES ARE PRODUCED IN FIRE
CONTAINERS MAY EXPLODE IN FIRE

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

FIRE HAZARDS

* DOES NOT BURN.
* Use dry chemical, CO₂, water spray, alcohol or polymer foam extinguishers.
* POISONOUS GASES ARE PRODUCED IN FIRE.
* CONTAINERS MAY EXPLODE IN FIRE.
* Use water spray to keep fire-exposed containers cool.
* Osmium Tetroxide may ignite combustibles (wood, paper, and oil).
* If employees are expected to fight fires, they must be trained and equipped as stated in OSHA 1910.156.

SPILLS AND EMERGENCIES

If Osmium Tetroxide is spilled, take the following steps:

* Evacuate persons not wearing protective equipment from area of spill until clean-up is complete.
* Cover with dry lime, sand or soda ash, and place in covered containers for disposal.
* Ventilate and wash area after clean-up is complete.
* It may be necessary to contain and dispose of Osmium Tetroxide 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.
* If employees are required to clean-up spills, they must be properly trained and equipped. OSHA 1910.120(q) may be applicable.

FOR LARGE SPILLS AND FIRES immediately call your fire department. You can request emergency information from the following:

CHEMTREC: (800) 424-9300
NJDEP HOTLINE: 1-877-WARN-DEP

HANDLING AND STORAGE

* Prior to working with Osmium Tetroxide you should be trained on its proper handling and storage.
* Osmium Tetroxide is not compatible with OXIDIZING AGENTS (such as PERCHLORATES, PEROXIDES, PERMANGANATES, CHLORATES, NITRATES, CHLORINE, BROMINE and FLUORINE); EASILY OXIDIZED ORGANIC MATERIALS; and HYDROGEN CHLORIDE.
* Osmium Tetroxide should be kept refrigerated in tightly sealed containers away from COMBUSTIBLE MATERIALS.

FIRST AID

* For POISON INFORMATION call 1-800-222-1222

Eye Contact
* Immediately flush with large amounts of water for at least 15 minutes, occasionally lifting upper and lower lids. Seek medical attention immediately.

Skin Contact
* Quickly remove contaminated clothing. Immediately wash area with large amounts of soap and water. Seek medical attention immediately.

Breathing
* 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.

PHYSICAL DATA

Vapor Pressure: 7 mm Hg at 68°F (20°C)
Water Solubility: Slightly soluble

OTHER COMMONLY USED NAMES

Chemical Name:
Osmium Oxide
Other Names:
Osmic Acid; Perosmic Oxide

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Not intended to be copied and sold for commercial purposes.
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