



# Right to Know Hazardous Substance Fact Sheet

Common Name: **POTASSIUM ARSENITE**

Synonyms: Potassium Metaarsenite; Potassium Arsonate

Chemical Name: Arsonic Acid, Potassium Salt

Date: August 1999      Revision: September 2008

CAS Number: 10124-50-2

RTK Substance Number: 1557

DOT Number: UN 1678

## Description and Use

**Potassium Arsenite** is an odorless, white powder used in insecticides, fungicides, and weed killer.

## Reasons for Citation

- ▶ **Potassium Arsenite** is on the Right to Know Hazardous Substance List because it is cited by OSHA, ACGIH, DOT, NIOSH, NTP, DEP, IARC, IRIS 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 flushing. Seek medical attention immediately.

### 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   | 4     | -    |
| FLAMMABILITY                                       | 0     | -    |
| REACTIVITY   | 0     | -    |
| CARCINOGEN<br>POISONOUS GASES ARE PRODUCED IN FIRE |       |      |

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

- ▶ **Potassium Arsenite** can affect you when inhaled and may be absorbed through the skin.
- ▶ **Potassium Arsenite** is a CARCINOGEN. HANDLE WITH EXTREME CAUTION.
- ▶ Skin contact can cause irritation, burns, rash and loss of pigment.
- ▶ Eye contact can cause irritation and burns.
- ▶ Inhaling **Potassium Arsenite** can irritate the nose and throat and can cause an ulcer or hole in the "bone" (septum) dividing the inner nose.
- ▶ Exposure to **Potassium Arsenite** can cause weakness, poor appetite, headache and even death.
- ▶ **Potassium Arsenite** may damage the nervous system and liver.

## Workplace Exposure Limits

The following exposure limits are for *inorganic Arsenic compounds* (measured as *Arsenic*):

OSHA: The legal airborne permissible exposure limit (PEL) is **0.01 mg/m<sup>3</sup>** averaged over an 8-hour workshift.

NIOSH: The recommended airborne exposure limit (REL) is **0.002 mg/m<sup>3</sup>**, which should not be exceeded for any 15-minute work period.

ACGIH: The threshold limit value (TLV) is **0.01 mg/m<sup>3</sup>** averaged over an 8-hour workshift.

- ▶ **Potassium Arsenite** is 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.
- ▶ 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 **Potassium Arsenite**:

- ▶ Skin contact can cause irritation, burns, rash and loss of pigment.
- ▶ Eye contact can cause irritation, burns and red, watery eyes.
- ▶ Inhaling **Potassium Arsenite** can irritate the nose and throat causing coughing and wheezing.
- ▶ Exposure to **Potassium Arsenite** can cause weakness, poor appetite, nausea, vomiting, headache, muscle cramps and even death.

### Chronic Health Effects

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

### Cancer Hazard

- ▶ **Potassium Arsenite** is a CARCINOGEN in humans. There is evidence that *inorganic Arsenic compounds* cause skin, liver, and lung cancer in humans.
- ▶ Many scientists believe there is no safe level of exposure to a carcinogen.

### Reproductive Hazard

- ▶ While **Potassium Arsenite** has not been identified as a teratogen or a reproductive hazard, *Arsenic* and *Arsenic compounds* are teratogens and may also cause reproductive damage, such as reduced fertility and interference with menstrual cycles. **Potassium Arsenite** should be handled WITH EXTREME CAUTION.

### Other Effects

- ▶ Repeated skin contact can cause thickened skin and/or patchy areas of darkening and loss of pigment. Some persons may develop white lines on the nails.
- ▶ Long-term exposure can cause an ulcer or hole in the "bone" (septum) dividing the inner nose, hoarseness and sore eyes.
- ▶ **Potassium Arsenite** may damage the nervous system causing numbness, "pins and needles," and/or weakness in the hands and feet.
- ▶ **Potassium Arsenite** may damage the liver.

## Medical

### Medical Testing

Before first exposure and every 12 months thereafter, OSHA requires your employer to provide (for persons exposed to greater than **0.005 mg/m<sup>3</sup>** of *Arsenic*) a work and medical history and exam which shall include:

- ▶ Chest x-ray
- ▶ Exam of the nose, skin and nails
- ▶ Test for urine *Arsenic*. This is most accurate at the end of the workday. Eating shellfish or fish may elevate *Arsenic* levels for up to two days. At NIOSH recommended exposure levels, urine *Arsenic* should not be greater than **100 micrograms per liter** of urine.

After suspected overexposure, repeat these tests and consider exam of the nervous system and liver function tests. Also examine your skin periodically for abnormal growth. Skin cancer from *Arsenic* can be easily cured when detected early.

OSHA requires your employer to provide you and your doctor with a copy of the OSHA *Inorganic Arsenic* Standard (29 CFR 1910.1018).

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 can cause liver damage. Drinking alcohol may increase the liver damage caused by **Potassium Arsenite**.

### Conditions Made Worse By Exposure

- ▶ May scientists believe that skin changes such as thickening and pigment changes make those skin areas more likely to develop skin cancer.

## 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:

- ▶ Specific engineering controls are required for this chemical by OSHA. Refer to the OSHA *Inorganic Arsenic* Standard (29 CFR 1910.1018).
- ▶ Use a vacuum or a wet method to reduce dust during clean-up. DO NOT DRY SWEEP.
- ▶ Use a high efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filter when vacuuming. Do not use a standard shop vacuum.

## 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 **Potassium Arsenite**. 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 Nitrile and Natural Rubber for gloves and DuPont Tyvek®, or the equivalent, as a protective material for clothing.

### Eye Protection

- ▶ Wear eye protection with side shields or goggles.
- ▶ 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 not higher than **0.1 mg/m<sup>3</sup>** (as *Arsenic*), use a half-mask air purifying respirator equipped with high efficiency filters.
- ▶ Where the potential exists for exposure not higher than **0.5 mg/m<sup>3</sup>** (as *Arsenic*), use a full facepiece, air purifying respirator with high efficiency filters.
- ▶ Where the potential exists for exposure not higher than **5 mg/m<sup>3</sup>** (as *Arsenic*), use any powered-air purifying respirator with high efficiency filters or a half-mask supplied-air respirator operated in a positive pressure mode.
- ▶ Leave the area immediately if (1) while wearing a filter or cartridge respirator you can smell, taste, or otherwise detect *Calcium Arsenate*, (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.
- ▶ Exposure to **5 mg/m<sup>3</sup>** (as *Arsenic*) is immediately dangerous to life and health. If the possibility of exposure above **5 mg/m<sup>3</sup>** 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).

- ▶ Extinguish fire using an agent suitable for type of surrounding fire. **Potassium Arsenite** itself does not burn.
- ▶ POISONOUS GASES ARE PRODUCED IN FIRE, including *Arsine*, *Arsenic Oxides* and *Potassium Oxides*.
- ▶ Use water spray to keep fire-exposed containers cool.

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 **Potassium Arsenite** is spilled, take the following steps:

- ▶ Evacuate personnel and secure and control entrance to the area.
- ▶ Eliminate all ignition sources.
- ▶ Moisten spilled material first or use a HEPA-filter vacuum for clean-up and deposit into sealed containers.
- ▶ Ventilate and wash area after clean-up is complete.
- ▶ DO NOT wash into sewer.
- ▶ It may be necessary to contain and dispose of **Potassium Arsenite** 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 **Potassium Arsenite** you should be trained on its proper handling and storage.

- ▶ A regulated, marked area should be established where **Potassium Arsenite** is handled, used or stored as required by the OSHA *Inorganic Arsenic* Standard (29 CFR 1910.1018).
- ▶ **Potassium Arsenite** reacts with STRONG ACIDS (such as HYDROCHLORIC, SULFURIC and NITRIC) to form toxic *Arsine gas*.
- ▶ **Potassium Arsenite** attacks many METALS to form flammable and explosive *Hydrogen gas*.
- ▶ Store in tightly closed containers in a cool, well-ventilated area and prevent exposure to AIR and CARBON DIOXIDE.

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>

*The Right to Know Hazardous Substance Fact Sheets 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 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 on human health effects that may result from exposure to various chemicals, maintained by federal EPA.

**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.

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

**Protective Action Criteria (PAC)** are values established by the Department of Energy and are based on AEGs and ERPGs. They are used for emergency planning of chemical release events.

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 force exerted by the vapor in equilibrium with the solid or liquid phase of the same substance. The higher the vapor pressure the higher concentration of the substance in air.

Common Name: **POTASSIUM ARSENITE**

Synonyms: Potassium Metaarsenite; Potassium Arsonate

CAS No: 10124-50-2

 Molecular Formula:  $A_5H_3K_xO_4$ 

RTK Substance No: 1557

Description: White, odorless powder

## HAZARD DATA

| Hazard Rating   | Firefighting  | Reactivity  |
|---|---|---|
| <b>4 - Health</b><br><b>0 - Fire</b><br><b>0 - Reactivity</b><br>DOT#: UN 1678<br>ERG Guide #: 154<br>Hazard Class: 6.1<br>(Poison) | Extinguish fire using an agent suitable for type of surrounding fire. <b>Potassium Arsenite</b> itself does not burn.<br>POISONOUS GASES ARE PRODUCED IN FIRE, including <i>Arsine</i> , <i>Arsenic Oxides</i> and <i>Potassium Oxides</i> .<br>Use water spray to keep fire-exposed containers cool. | <b>Potassium Arsenite</b> reacts with STRONG ACIDS (such as HYDROCHLORIC, SULFURIC and NITRIC) to form toxic <i>Arsine gas</i> .<br><b>Potassium Arsenite</b> attacks many METALS to form flammable and explosive <i>Hydrogen gas</i> .<br><b>Potassium Arsenite</b> decomposes slowly in AIR and CARBON DIOXIDE. |

## SPILL/LEAKS

**Isolation Distance:**

Spill: 25 meters (75 feet)

Fire: 800 meters (1/2 mile)

Moisten spilled material first or use a HEPA-filter vacuum for clean-up and deposit into sealed containers.

DO NOT wash into sewer.

Toxic to aquatic plants and animals.

## PHYSICAL PROPERTIES

**Odor Threshold:** Odorless

**Flash Point:** Noncombustible

**Water Solubility:** Soluble

**Melting Point:** 572°F (300°C) (decomposes slowly in air)

**Molecular Weight:** 254

## EXPOSURE LIMITS

**OSHA:** 0.01 mg/m<sup>3</sup>, 8-hr TWA

**NIOSH:** 0.002 mg/m<sup>3</sup>, 15-min Ceiling

**ACGIH:** 0.01 mg/m<sup>3</sup>, 8-hr TWA

**IDLH:** 5 mg/m<sup>3</sup>

 (All the above are for *inorganic Arsenic*)

## PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

**Gloves:** Nitrile and Natural Rubber

**Coveralls:** DuPont Tyvek®

**Respirator:** <0.1 mg/m<sup>3</sup> - Full facepiece APR with High efficiency filter  
 <0.5 mg/m<sup>3</sup> - Supplied air

## HEALTH EFFECTS

**Eyes:** Irritation, burns and red watery eyes

**Skin:** Irritation, burns, rash and loss of pigment

**Inhalation:** Nose and throat irritation with coughing and wheezing, weakness, nausea, vomiting, headache and muscle cramps

**Chronic:** *Inorganic Arsenic compounds* cause skin, liver, and lung cancer in humans

## 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. Seek medical attention immediately.

**Quickly** remove contaminated clothing. Wash contaminated skin with large amounts of water.

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

**Transfer** promptly to a medical facility.