

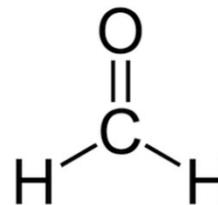


EHS Fact Sheet

Formaldehyde

Formaldehyde

Formaldehyde is a colorless, pungent-smelling gas that is commonly purchased and used as in aqueous solutions known as formalin. Often, methanol is added to the aqueous solution. Paraformaldehyde is the polymer (solid form) of formaldehyde, and, when heated, depolymerizes back to formaldehyde.



Formaldehyde

syn: methanal; formalin (in aqueous solutions); methyl aldehyde; formic aldehyde; oxymethylene

Hazards and Toxicity

- Formaldehyde is known to be a human carcinogen (NTP, OSHA).
- The Permissible Exposure Limit (PEL) for Formaldehyde is 0.75 ppm measured as an 8-hr time-weighted average.
- The Short-Term Exposure Limit (STEL) is 2 ppm, which is the maximum exposure allowed during a 15 minute period.
- Exposure to >25 ppm can cause pulmonary edema, which could lead to death.
- Exposure to >100 ppm is immediately dangerous to life and health (IDLH).
- Concentration of >0.1 ppm can irritate the mouth, nose and/or throat.
- Formaldehyde has a odor threshold (the level in which a normal person can smell the chemical) is about 0.5-1.0 ppm.
- Concentrations of 3-5 ppm formaldehyde may severely irritate the eyes.
- Direct contact with eyes and skin may cause severe burns, blurry vision, loss of vision, or dermatitis. It is also a sensitizer.
- Combustible. Approximate flash point 64 °C (147 °F) for about a 37% solution.
- Corrosive. A solution of formaldehyde can have a pH range of 2.8-4.0.
- Consult the SDS for additional information.

More Information

OSHA has a Fact Sheet on Formaldehyde at:
https://www.osha.gov/OshDoc/data_General_Facts/formaldehyde-factsheet.html

Usage

- Before working with formaldehyde, the lab needs to prepare a written plan/procedure.
- Before working with formaldehyde, the worker must receive specific, documented training for formaldehyde use and receive annual training thereafter.
- Wear appropriate PPE such as chemical safety goggles, gloves and lab coat. A respirator may be needed; please contact EHS for more information regarding the Respiratory Protection Program.
- Use engineering controls such as fume hoods.
- Do not use hypochlorites (such as bleach) or hydrochloric acid with formaldehyde, as it can form the potent carcinogen bis-chloromethyl ether.
- Store away from strong oxidizers.
- Label all containers if the concentration is >0.1%.

Spills

- Clean up small spills using absorbent material.
- Wear appropriate PPE and have adequate ventilation.
- Eliminate ignition sources.
- Collect clean up material for waste disposal.
- For large spills, evacuate area and contact EHS.

Disposal

- Waste formaldehyde, formalin and paraformaldehyde needs to be routed through EHS Materials Management section. Please contact EHS for more information.
- Tissue fixed with formaldehyde needs to be disposed of as bio-waste.