



# New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services

## HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCE FACT SHEET

Common Name: **ARSENIC ACID**

CAS Number: 7778-39-4

DOT Number: UN 1554 (Solid)

UN 1553 (Liquid)

RTK Substance number: 0153

Date: April 1996

Revision: April 2002

### HAZARD SUMMARY

- \* **Arsenic Acid** can affect you when breathed in and by passing through your skin.
- \* **Arsenic Acid** may cause mutations. Handle with extreme caution.
- \* **Arsenic Acid** should be handled as a teratogen—with extreme caution.
- \* Skin contact can cause irritation, burning, itching, rash, thickened skin and pigment changes.
- \* Eye contact can cause irritation and red and watery eyes.
- \* Breathing **Arsenic Acid** can irritate the nose and throat and cause a hole in the inner nose.
- \* **Arsenic Acid** can cause headache, poor appetite, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and stomach cramps.
- \* High or repeated exposure can cause nerve damage, with “pins and needles,” burning, numbness and later weakness of the arms and legs.
- \* **Arsenic Acid** may affect the liver.

### IDENTIFICATION

**Arsenic Acid** is a white semi-transparent crystalline (sand-like) material. It is used for wood treatment, as a drying agent and soil sterilant, and to make other *Arsenates*.

### REASON FOR CITATION

- \* **Arsenic Acid** is on the Hazardous Substance List because it is regulated by OSHA and cited by ACGIH, DOT, NIOSH, DEP, IARC, HHAG 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 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.

### 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 is **.002 mg/m<sup>3</sup>**, which should not be exceeded at any time.

ACGIH: The recommended airborne exposure limit is **0.01 mg/m<sup>3</sup>** averaged over an 8-hour workshift.

- \* **Arsenic Acid** may cause mutations. All contact with this chemical 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.

### WAYS OF REDUCING EXPOSURE

- \* 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. as
- \* A regulated, marked area should be established where **Arsenic Acid** is handled, used, or stored as required by the OSHA Standard: 1910.1018.
- \* Wear protective work clothing.
- \* Wash thoroughly immediately after exposure to **Arsenic Acid** 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 **Arsenic Acid** to potentially exposed worker.

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 **Arsenic Acid**:

- \* Skin contact can cause irritation, burning, itching and a rash.
- \* Eye contact can cause irritation and red and watery eyes.
- \* Breathing **Arsenic Acid** can irritate the nose and throat.
- \* **Arsenic Acid** can cause headache, poor appetite, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and stomach cramps.

### Chronic Health Effects

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

#### Cancer Hazard

- \* **Arsenic Acid** may cause mutations (genetic changes). Whether or not it poses a cancer hazard needs further study.

#### Reproductive Hazard

- \* **Arsenic Acid** may be a teratogen in humans since it has been shown to be a teratogen in animals.

#### Other Long-Term Effects

- \* Long-term exposure can cause an ulcer or hole in the "bone" dividing the inner nose. Hoarseness and sore eyes also occur.
- \* High or repeated exposure can cause nerve damage, with "pins and needles," burning, numbness and later weakness of the arms and legs.
- \* Repeated skin contact can cause thickened skin and/or patchy areas of darkening and loss of pigment. Some persons develop white lines on the nails.
- \* **Arsenic Acid** may affect the liver.

## MEDICAL

### Medical Testing

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

- \* Exam of the nose, skin, eyes, nails and nervous system.
- \* Liver function tests.
- \* Test for urine *Arsenic*. This is most accurate at the end of a 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. Also examine your skin periodically for abnormal growths. Skin cancer from *Arsenic* is easily cured when detected early.

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 more than light alcohol consumption can cause liver damage, drinking alcohol may increase the liver damage caused by **Arsenic Acid**.

### Conditions Made Worse By Exposure

- \* Many 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

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 controls are recommended:

- \* Where possible, automatically transfer **Arsenic Acid** from drums or other storage containers to process containers.
- \* Specific engineering controls are required for this chemical by OSHA. Refer to the OSHA Standard: 1910.1018.

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

- \* Workers whose clothing has been contaminated by **Arsenic Acid** 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 **Arsenic Acid**.
- \* 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 **Arsenic Acid**, immediately wash or shower to remove the chemical. At the end of the workshift, wash any areas of the body that may have contacted **Arsenic Acid**, whether or not known skin contact has occurred.
- \* Do not eat, smoke, or drink where **Arsenic Acid** is handled, processed, or stored, since the chemical can be swallowed. Wash hands carefully before eating, drinking, applying cosmetics, 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 **Arsenic Acid**. 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.

### 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/m<sup>3</sup>** (as *Arsenic*), 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 **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>** (as *Arsenic*) exists, use a NIOSH approved self-contained breathing apparatus with a full facepiece operated in a pressure-demand or other positive-pressure mode.

## 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: Can men as well as women be affected by chemicals that cause reproductive system damage?
- A: Yes. Some chemicals reduce potency or fertility in both men and women. Some damage sperm and eggs, possibly leading to birth defects.
- Q: Who is at the greatest risk from reproductive hazards?
- A: Pregnant women are at greatest risk from chemicals that harm the developing fetus. However, chemicals may affect the ability to have children, so both men and women of childbearing age are at high risk.

- Q: Should I be concerned if a chemical is a teratogen in animals?
- A: Yes. Although some chemicals may affect humans differently than they affect animals, damage to animals suggests that similar damage can occur in humans.
- 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.

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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/eoh/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.

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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).

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.

