

Occupational Health Guideline for Naphthalene

INTRODUCTION

This guideline is intended as a source of information for employees, employers, physicians, industrial hygienists, and other occupational health professionals who may have a need for such information. It does not attempt to present all data; rather, it presents pertinent information and data in summary form.

SUBSTANCE IDENTIFICATION

- Formula: $C_{10}H_8$
- Synonyms: White tar; naphthalin
- Appearance and odor: Colorless to brown solid with the odor of mothballs.

PERMISSIBLE EXPOSURE LIMIT (PEL)

The current OSHA standard for naphthalene is 10 parts of naphthalene per million parts of air (ppm) averaged over an eight-hour work shift. This may also be expressed as 50 milligrams of naphthalene per cubic meter of air (mg/m^3).

HEALTH HAZARD INFORMATION

- Routes of exposure
Naphthalene can affect the body if it is inhaled, if it comes in contact with the eyes or skin, or if it is swallowed. It may enter the body through the skin.
- Effects of overexposure
 1. *Short-term Exposure:* Inhalation or ingestion of naphthalene may cause abdominal cramps, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, headache, tiredness, confusion, painful urination, and bloody or dark urine. Swallowing large amounts may cause convulsions or coma. Inhalation, ingestion, and possibly skin absorption of naphthalene may cause destruction of red blood cells with anemia, fever, yellow jaundice, bloody urine, kidney and liver damage. Naphthalene, on contact with the eyes, has produced irritation. Naphthalene, on contact with the skin, has produced skin irritation.

2. *Long-term Exposure:* Repeated skin exposure to naphthalene may cause an allergic rash. Repeated exposure may cause cataracts.

3. *Reporting Signs and Symptoms:* A physician should be contacted if anyone develops any signs or symptoms and suspects that they are caused by exposure to naphthalene.

- Recommended medical surveillance

The following medical procedures should be made available to each employee who is exposed to naphthalene at potentially hazardous levels:

1. *Initial Medical Examination:*

—A complete history and physical examination: The purpose is to detect pre-existing conditions that might place the exposed employee at increased risk, and to establish a baseline for future health monitoring. Persons with a deficiency of glucose-6-phosphate dehydrogenase in erythrocytes may be at increased risk from exposure. Examination of the eyes, blood, liver and kidneys should be stressed. The skin should be examined for evidence of chronic disorders.

—A complete blood count: Naphthalene has been shown to cause red blood cell hemolysis. A complete blood count should be performed, including a red cell count, a white cell count, and a differential count of a stained smear, as well as hemoglobin and hematocrit.

—Urinalysis: Since kidney damage may also occur from exposure to naphthalene, a urinalysis should be performed, including at a minimum specific gravity, albumin, glucose, and a microscopic on centrifuged sediment.

2. *Periodic Medical Examination:* The aforementioned medical examinations should be repeated on an annual basis.

- Summary of toxicology

Naphthalene vapor causes hemolysis and eye irritation; it may cause cataracts. Severe intoxication from ingestion of the solid results in characteristic manifestations of marked intravascular hemolysis and its consequences, including potentially fatal hyperkalemia. Initial symptoms include eye irritation, headache, confu-

These recommendations reflect good industrial hygiene and medical surveillance practices and their implementation will assist in achieving an effective occupational health program. However, they may not be sufficient to achieve compliance with all requirements of OSHA regulations.

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sion, excitement, malaise, profuse sweating, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, and irritation of the bladder; there may be progression to jaundice, hematuria, hemoglobinuria, renal tubular blockage, and acute renal shutdown. Hematologic features include red cell fragmentation, icterus, severe anemia with nucleated red cells, leukocytosis, and dramatic decreases in hemoglobin, hematocrit, and red cell count; sometimes there is formation of Heinz bodies and methemoglobin. Individuals with a deficiency of glucose-6-phosphate dehydrogenase in erythrocytes may be more susceptible to hemolysis by naphthalene. Cataracts and ocular irritation have been produced experimentally in animals and have been described in humans; of 21 workers exposed to high concentrations of fume or vapor for 5 years, 8 had peripheral lens opacities; in other studies no abnormalities of the eyes have been detected in workers exposed to naphthalene for several years. The vapor causes eye irritation at 15 ppm; eye contact with the solid may result in conjunctivitis, superficial injury to the cornea, chorioretinitis, scotoma, and diminished visual acuity. Naphthalene on the skin may cause hypersensitivity dermatitis; chronic dermatitis is rare.

CHEMICAL AND PHYSICAL PROPERTIES

• Physical data

1. Molecular weight: 128.2
2. Boiling point (760 mm Hg): 218 C (424 F)
3. Specific gravity (water = 1): 1.14
4. Vapor density (air = 1 at boiling point of naphthalene): 4.4
5. Melting point: 74— 80 C (165 — 176 F)
6. Vapor pressure at 20 C (68 F): 0.05 mm Hg
7. Solubility in water, g/100 g water at 20 C (68 F): 0.003
8. Evaporation rate (butyl acetate = 1): Much less than 1

• Reactivity

1. Conditions contributing to instability: None.
2. Incompatibilities: Contact with strong oxidizers may cause fires and explosions.
3. Hazardous decomposition products: Toxic gases and vapors (such as dense acrid smoke and carbon monoxide) may be released in a fire involving naphthalene.
4. Special precautions: Melted naphthalene will attack some forms of plastics, rubber, and coatings.

• Flammability

1. Flash point: 79 C (174 F) (closed cup)
2. Autoignition temperature: 526 C (979 F)
3. Flammable limits in air, % by volume: Lower: 0.9; Upper: 5.9
4. Extinguishant: Carbon dioxide, dry chemical, foam

• Warning properties

1. Odor Threshold: The AIHA *Hygienic Guide* reports that the odor threshold of naphthalene is "at least as low as 0.3 ppm."

2. Eye Irritation Level: The *Hygienic Guide* states that "naphthalene vapor is reported to cause eye irritation at 15 ppm or above in air."

3. Evaluation of Warning Properties: Through its odor and irritant effects, naphthalene can be detected at or below the permissible exposure limit. Naphthalene, therefore, is treated as a material with good warning properties.

MONITORING AND MEASUREMENT PROCEDURES

• General

Measurements to determine employee exposure are best taken so that the average eight-hour exposure is based on a single eight-hour sample or on two four-hour samples. Several short-time interval samples (up to 30 minutes) may also be used to determine the average exposure level. Air samples should be taken in the employee's breathing zone (air that would most nearly represent that inhaled by the employee).

• Method

Sampling and analyses may be performed by collection of vapors using an adsorption tube with subsequent desorption with carbon disulfide and gas chromatographic analysis. Also, detector tubes certified by NIOSH under 42 CFR Part 84 or other direct-reading devices calibrated to measure naphthalene may be used. An analytical method for naphthalene is in the *NIOSH Manual of Analytical Methods*, 2nd Ed., Vol. 4, 1978, available from the Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402 (GPO No. 017-033-00317-3).

RESPIRATORS

• Good industrial hygiene practices recommend that engineering controls be used to reduce environmental concentrations to the permissible exposure level. However, there are some exceptions where respirators may be used to control exposure. Respirators may be used when engineering and work practice controls are not technically feasible, "when such controls are in the process of being installed, or when they fail and need to be supplemented. Respirators may also be used for operations which require entry into tanks or closed vessels, and in emergency situations. If the use of respirators is necessary, the only respirators permitted are those that have been approved by the Mine Safety and Health Administration (formerly Mining Enforcement and Safety Administration) or by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health.

• In addition to respirator selection, a complete respiratory protection program should be instituted which includes regular training, maintenance, inspection, cleaning, and evaluation.

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

- Employees should be provided with and required to use impervious clothing, gloves, face shields (eight-inch minimum), and other appropriate protective clothing necessary to prevent repeated or prolonged skin contact with naphthalene or liquids containing naphthalene.
- If employees' clothing may have become contaminated with solid naphthalene, employees should change into uncontaminated clothing before leaving the work premises.
- Clothing contaminated with naphthalene should be placed in closed containers for storage until it can be discarded or until provision is made for the removal of naphthalene from the clothing. If the clothing is to be laundered or otherwise cleaned to remove the naphthalene, the person performing the operation should be informed of naphthalene's hazardous properties.
- Non-impervious clothing which becomes contaminated with naphthalene should be removed promptly and not reworn until the naphthalene is removed from the clothing.
- Employees should be provided with and required to use dust- and splash-proof safety goggles where solid naphthalene or liquids containing naphthalene may contact the eyes.

SANITATION

- Skin that becomes contaminated with naphthalene should be promptly washed or showered with soap or mild detergent and water to remove any naphthalene.
- Eating and smoking should not be permitted in areas where solid naphthalene is handled, processed, or stored.
- Employees who handle naphthalene or liquids containing naphthalene should wash their hands thoroughly with soap or mild detergent and water before eating, smoking, or using toilet facilities.

COMMON OPERATIONS AND CONTROLS

The following list includes some common operations in which exposure to naphthalene may occur and control methods which may be effective in each case:

| Operation | Controls |
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| Formulation of insecticide and moth repellent as flakes, powder, balls, or cakes | Local exhaust ventilation; general dilution ventilation; personal protective equipment |
| Use as a fumigant for moth repellent and insecticide | General dilution ventilation; personal protective equipment |

Operation

Use in manufacture of chemical intermediates for production of pharmaceuticals, resins, dyes, plasticizers, solvents, coatings, insecticides, pigments, rubber chemicals, tanning agents, surfactants, waxes, cable coatings, textile spinning lubricants, rodenticides, and in storage batteries

Manufacture of naphthalene

Controls

Local exhaust ventilation; general dilution ventilation; personal protective equipment

Local exhaust ventilation; process enclosure; general dilution ventilation; personal protective equipment

EMERGENCY FIRST AID PROCEDURES

In the event of an emergency, institute first aid procedures and send for first aid or medical assistance.

• Eye Exposure

If naphthalene or liquids containing naphthalene get into the eyes, wash eyes immediately with large amounts of water, lifting the lower and upper lids occasionally. If irritation is present after washing, get medical attention. Contact lenses should not be worn when working with this chemical.

• Skin Exposure

If molten naphthalene gets on the skin, immediately flush the skin with large amounts of water. Get medical attention immediately. If naphthalene or liquids containing naphthalene get on the skin, promptly wash the contaminated skin using soap or mild detergent and water. If naphthalene or liquids containing naphthalene penetrate through the clothing, remove the clothing immediately and wash the skin using soap or mild detergent and water. If irritation persists after washing, get medical attention.

• Breathing

If a person breathes in large amounts of naphthalene, move the exposed person to fresh air at once.

• Swallowing

When naphthalene has been swallowed and the person is conscious, give the person large quantities of water immediately. After the water has been swallowed, try to get the person to vomit by having him touch the back of his throat with his finger. Do not make an unconscious person vomit. Get medical attention immediately.

• Rescue

Move the affected person from the hazardous exposure. If the exposed person has been overcome, notify some-

one else and put into effect the established emergency rescue procedures. Do not become a casualty. Understand the facility's emergency rescue procedures and know the locations of rescue equipment before the need arises.

SPILL AND DISPOSAL PROCEDURES

- Persons not wearing protective equipment and clothing should be restricted from areas of spills until cleanup has been completed.

- If naphthalene is spilled, the following steps should be taken:

1. Ventilate area of spill.

2. For small quantities, sweep onto paper or other suitable material, place in an appropriate container and burn in a safe place (such as a fume hood). Large quantities may be reclaimed; however, if this is not practical, dissolve in a flammable solvent (such as alcohol) and atomize in a suitable combustion chamber.

- Waste disposal methods:

Naphthalene may be disposed of:

1. By making packages of naphthalene in paper or other flammable material and burning in a suitable combustion chamber.

2. By dissolving naphthalene in a flammable solvent (such as alcohol) and atomizing in a suitable combustion chamber.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

To find additional information on naphthalene, look up naphthalene in the following documents:

- Medical Surveillance for Chemical Hazards
- Respiratory Protection for Chemical Hazards
- Personal Protection and Sanitation for Chemical Hazards

These documents are available through the NIOSH Division of Technical Services, 4676 Columbia Parkway, Cincinnati, Ohio 45226.

REFERENCES

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RESPIRATORY PROTECTION FOR NAPHTHALENE

| Condition | Minimum Respiratory Protection* Required Above 10 ppm |
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| Particulate and Vapor Concentration | |
| 500 ppm or less | A chemical cartridge respirator with a full facepiece, organic vapor cartridge(s), and dust filter. A gas mask with a chin-style or a front- or back-mounted organic vapor canister and dust filter. Any supplied-air respirator with a full facepiece, helmet, or hood. Any self-contained breathing apparatus with a full facepiece. |
| Greater than 500 ppm or entry and escape from unknown concentrations | Self-contained breathing apparatus with a full facepiece operated in pressure-demand or other positive pressure mode. A combination respirator which includes a Type C supplied-air respirator with a full facepiece operated in pressure-demand or other positive pressure or continuous-flow mode and an auxiliary self-contained breathing apparatus operated in pressure-demand or other positive pressure mode. |
| Fire Fighting | Self-contained breathing apparatus with a full facepiece operated in pressure-demand or other positive pressure mode. |
| Escape | Any gas mask providing protection against organic vapors and particulates. Any escape self-contained breathing apparatus. |

*Only NIOSH-approved or MSHA-approved equipment should be used.

