

Occupational Health Guideline for Pentachlorophenol

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_5Cl_5OH
- Synonyms: PCP; penta
- Appearance and odor: Light brown solid with a pungent odor when hot.

PERMISSIBLE EXPOSURE LIMIT (PEL)

The current OSHA standard for pentachlorophenol is 0.5 milligram of pentachlorophenol per cubic meter of air (mg/m^3) averaged over an eight-hour work shift.

HEALTH HAZARD INFORMATION

• Routes of exposure

Pentachlorophenol 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

Exposure to pentachlorophenol may cause irritation of the eyes and respiratory tract. Bronchitis has been reported to occur. Systemic effects from either a large exposure or repeated smaller exposures include weakness, loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, shortness of breath, chest pain, excessive sweating, headache, and dizziness. In fatal cases the temperature is often very high and death may occur as early as three hours after the onset of symptoms. The risk of serious intoxication is greater in hot weather. Persons with decreased liver or kidney functions are more susceptible to poisoning from this chemical. Repeated exposure to pentachlorophenol may cause an acne-like skin rash and liver

damage. Commercial pentachlorophenol may be contaminated with dioxin compounds which are much more toxic than pentachlorophenol.

• 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 pentachlorophenol.

• Recommended medical surveillance

The following medical procedures should be made available to each employee who is exposed to pentachlorophenol 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. Examination of the cardiovascular system, eyes, upper respiratory tract, liver, and kidneys should be stressed. The skin should be examined for evidence of chronic disorders. Analysis of the urine for pentachlorophenol may be helpful in estimating the extent of absorption.

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

• Summary of toxicology

Pentachlorophenol dust and mist cause irritation of the eyes and upper respiratory tract; absorption results in an increase in metabolic rate and hyperpyrexia; prolonged skin exposure causes an acneform dermatitis. Human exposure to dust or mist concentrations greater than $1 mg/m^3$ causes pain in the nose and throat, violent sneezing, and cough; $0.3 mg/m^3$ may cause some nose irritation; persons acclimated to pentachlorophenol can tolerate concentrations up to $2.4 mg/m^3$. Pentachlorophenol readily penetrates the skin; systemic intoxication is cumulative and has been fatal. Intoxication is characterized by weakness, anorexia, weight loss, and profuse sweating; there also may be headache, dizziness, nausea, vomiting, dyspnea, and chest pain. In fatal cases, the body temperature is frequently extremely high and

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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death has occurred as early as 3 hours after the onset of symptoms. The risk of serious intoxication is increased during hot weather; persons with impaired liver or kidney function are more susceptible to the effects of pentachlorophenol. The dust, mist, and vapor cause eye irritation. Prolonged exposure of workers has caused an acneform dermatitis; 10 workers engaged in production of pentachlorophenol for 5 to 10 months developed a widely disseminated skin eruption characterized by small and large furuncles, brown pigmentation, and some cicatrization; 7 workers also developed severe bronchitis; all but 1 worker still showed signs of extensive acne more than a year after cessation of exposure, and 4 still complained of bronchitis. On the skin, solutions of pentachlorophenol as dilute as 1% may cause irritation if contact is repeated or prolonged.

CHEMICAL AND PHYSICAL PROPERTIES

• Physical data

1. Molecular weight: 266.3
2. Boiling point (760 mm Hg): 311 C (592 F) (decomposes)
3. Specific gravity (water = 1): 2.0
4. Vapor density (air = 1 at boiling point of pentachlorophenol): Not applicable
5. Melting point: 182–190 C (360–374 F)
6. Vapor pressure at 20 C (68 F): 0.00017 mm Hg
7. Solubility in water, g/100 g water at 20 C (68 F): 0.002
8. Evaporation rate (butyl acetate = 1): Not applicable

• 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 hydrogen chloride, chlorinated phenols, and carbon monoxide) may be released when pentachlorophenol decomposes.
4. Special precautions: None.

• Flammability

1. Not combustible

• Warning properties

1. Odor Threshold: The AIHA *Hygienic Guide* states that pentachlorophenol has a characteristic odor. No quantitative information is available, however, concerning the odor threshold of this substance.

2. Irritation Levels: The *Documentation of TLV's* states that "dusts are particularly irritating to the eyes and nose, in concentrations appreciably greater than 1 mg/m³, but some irritation of the nose may occur at 0.3 mg/m³. Hardened workers can tolerate up to 2.4 mg/m³."

3. Evaluation of Warning Properties: Through its irritant effects, pentachlorophenol can be detected within three times of the permissible exposure limit. For the purposes of this guideline, therefore, pentachlorophenol 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

An analytical method for pentachlorophenol 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).

• Gleason, M. N., Gosselin, R. E., Hodge, H. C., and Smith, R. P.: *Clinical Toxicology of Commercial Products* (3rd ed.), Williams and Wilkins, Baltimore, 1969.

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 any possibility of skin contact with pentachlorophenol or liquids containing pentachlorophenol.

• If employees' clothing has had any possibility of being contaminated with pentachlorophenol or liquids containing pentachlorophenol, employees should change into uncontaminated clothing before leaving the work premises.

- Clothing which has had any possibility of being contaminated with pentachlorophenol should be placed in closed containers for storage until it can be discarded or until provision is made for the removal of pentachlorophenol from the clothing. If the clothing is to be laundered or otherwise cleaned to remove the pentachlorophenol, the person performing the operation should be informed of pentachlorophenol's hazardous properties.

- Where there is any possibility of exposure of an employee's body to pentachlorophenol or liquids containing pentachlorophenol, facilities for quick drenching of the body should be provided within the immediate work area for emergency use.

- Non-impervious clothing which becomes contaminated with pentachlorophenol should be removed immediately and not reworn until the pentachlorophenol is removed from the clothing.

- Employees should be provided with and required to use dust- and splash-proof safety goggles where there is any possibility of pentachlorophenol or liquids containing pentachlorophenol contacting the eyes.

- Where there is any possibility that employees' eyes may be exposed to pentachlorophenol or liquids containing pentachlorophenol, an eye-wash fountain should be provided within the immediate work area for emergency use.

SANITATION

- Skin that becomes contaminated with pentachlorophenol should be immediately washed or showered with soap or mild detergent and water to remove any pentachlorophenol.

- Workers subject to skin contact with pentachlorophenol or liquids containing pentachlorophenol should wash with soap or mild detergent and water any areas of the body which may have contacted pentachlorophenol at the end of each work day.

- Eating and smoking should not be permitted in areas where pentachlorophenol or liquids containing pentachlorophenol are handled, processed, or stored.

- Employees who handle pentachlorophenol or liquids containing pentachlorophenol 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 pentachlorophenol may occur and control methods which may be effective in each case:

Operation

Formulation of preservatives, pesticides, and fungicides

Application as a preservative for wood, starch, paint, adhesives, leather, latex, and oils; use in slime-algae control; use as a pesticide, herbicide, and snail control agent

Manufacture of pentachlorophenol

Controls

Process enclosure; local exhaust ventilation; personal protective equipment

Personal protective equipment

Process enclosure; local exhaust 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 pentachlorophenol or liquids containing pentachlorophenol get into the eyes, wash eyes immediately with large amounts of water, lifting the lower and upper lids occasionally. Get medical attention immediately. Contact lenses should not be worn when working with this chemical.

• Skin Exposure

If pentachlorophenol or liquids containing pentachlorophenol get on the skin, immediately wash the contaminated skin using soap or mild detergent and water. If pentachlorophenol or liquids containing pentachlorophenol penetrate through the clothing, remove the clothing immediately and wash the skin using soap or mild detergent and water. If irritation is present after washing, get medical attention.

• Breathing

If a person breathes in large amounts of pentachlorophenol, move the exposed person to fresh air at once. If breathing has stopped, perform artificial respiration. Keep the affected person warm and at rest. Get medical attention as soon as possible.

• Swallowing

When pentachlorophenol or liquids containing pentachlorophenol have 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 someone 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 pentachlorophenol is spilled, the following steps should be taken:

1. Ventilate area of spill.

2. Collect spilled material in the most convenient and safe manner and deposit in sealed containers for reclamation or for disposal in a secured sanitary landfill. Liquid containing pentachlorophenol should be absorbed in vermiculite, dry sand, earth, or a similar material.

- Waste disposal method:

Pentachlorophenol may be disposed of in sealed containers in a secured sanitary landfill.

REFERENCES

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RESPIRATORY PROTECTION FOR PENTACHLOROPHENOL

Condition

Minimum Respiratory Protection* Required Above 0.5 mg/m³

Particulate or Vapor Concentration

2.5 mg/m³ or less

Any chemical cartridge respirator with an organic vapor cartridge(s) and dust, fume, and mist filter(s), including pesticide respirators which meet the requirements of this class.**

Any supplied-air respirator.**

Any self-contained breathing apparatus.**

25 mg/m³ or less

Any chemical cartridge respirator with a full facepiece, an organic vapor cartridge(s), and dust, fume, and mist filter(s), including pesticide respirators which meet the requirements of this class.

A gas mask with a chin-style or a front- or back-mounted organic vapor canister and dust, fume, and mist filter, including pesticide respirators which meet the requirements of this class.

Any supplied-air respirator with a full facepiece, helmet, or hood.

Any self-contained breathing apparatus with a full facepiece.

150 mg/m³ or less

**If eye irritation occurs, full-facepiece respiratory protective equipment should be used.