Acetaldehyde

Synonyms: Ethanal, ethyl aldehyde

**Chemical Abstracts Service (CAS) Number**:
75-07-0

**Physical Properties**
- Colorless liquid with a pungent, fruity odor.
- Vapor pressure at 20 °C: 768 Torr
- Melting point: –124 °C
- Boiling point: 21 °C

**Exposure Limits**
- OSHA PEL: 200 ppm
- ACGIH TLV: 25 ppm

**Hazardous Characteristics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall Flamma-</th>
<th>Destructive</th>
<th>Absorbed</th>
<th>Sensitize-</th>
<th>Self-</th>
<th>Incompatible with:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sensitivity</td>
<td>to skin/eye</td>
<td>through skin</td>
<td>to skin</td>
<td>to skin?</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall toxicity</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

0: None (or very low); 1: Slight; 2: Moderate; 3: High; 4: Severe.

**Reactivity Hazards**
Polymerizes violently in the presence of many bases, of trace metals, and of acetic acid as well. Often spontaneously explodes when in contact with strong oxidizing agents. The vapor can ignite spontaneously when in contact with corroded metal. See Bretherick's *Handbook of Reactive Chemical Hazards* for details and for other incompatibilities.

Cited as known to be or reasonably anticipated to be carcinogenic in NTP-9? Yes

**Typical symptoms of acute exposures:**
- Sore throat, coughing, labored breathing, lung edema, unconsciousness if inhaled; serious cases can be fatal. Corrosive if in eyes; also causes inflammation and/or pain. On the skin causes inflammation and/or pain. Severely irritating if swallowed or in the mouth, and corrodes tissues, causes vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain. Repeated inhalation of the vapor produces effects similar to those associated with chronic alcoholic intoxication.

**Principal target organ(s) or system(s):**
- Respiratory system, eyes, skin, gastro-intestinal tract, central nervous system.

**Storage Requirements**
With other flammables in a cool, dry, well-ventilated location, away from ignition sources and separated from oxidizing agents.

**Additional Remarks**

The vapor is denser than air and can travel long distances; it is explosive when mixed with air. At ordinary temperatures the vapor pressure of acetaldehyde greatly exceeds the limits established by OSHA and ACGIH. Accordingly, users will be likely to be overexposed to the vapor of this compound unless appropriate precautions are rigidly maintained; see the MSDS for details. Note that symptoms of lung edema are not manifest immediately in victims who have inhaled acetaldehyde vapors or mist; some hours may elapse first; physical effort can exaggerate these symptoms. Rest is essential for persons exposed to excess vapor or mist.

**Notes**

This Chemical Laboratory Information Profile is not a Material Safety Data Sheet. It is a brief summary for teachers and their students that describes some of the hazards of this chemical as it is typically used in laboratories. On the basis of your knowledge of these hazards and before using or handling this chemical, you need to select the precautions and first-aid procedures to be followed. For that information as well as for other useful information, refer to Material Safety Data Sheets, container labels, and references in the scientific literature that pertain to this chemical.

**Reproductive Toxins**

Some substances that in fact are reproductive toxins are not yet recognized as such. For the best readily available and up-to-date information, refer to “DART/ETIC”. See the TOXNET home page at [www.sis.nlm.nih.gov](http://www.sis.nlm.nih.gov) and click on “Toxicology search”. Note that some of the data in DART/ETIC have not been peer-reviewed. See also Linda M. Frazier and Marvin L. Hage, *Reproductive Hazards of the Workplace*, Wiley, 1998; and T. H. Shepard, *Catalog of Teratogenic Agents*, 9th ed.; Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998.

**Abbreviations**

ACGIH TLV—American Conference of Governmental Industrial Hygienists—Threshold Limit Value. C—Ceiling. CAS—Chemical Abstracts Service. mg/m³—milligrams per cubic meter. NA—Not applicable. NE—Not established. NI—No information. NTP-9—National Toxicology Program, Ninth Annual Report on Carcinogens. OSHA PEL—Occupational Safety and Health Administration—Permissible Exposure Limit. ppm—parts per million. STEL/C—Short-term exposure limit and ceiling.

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Date of preparation: January 10, 2002