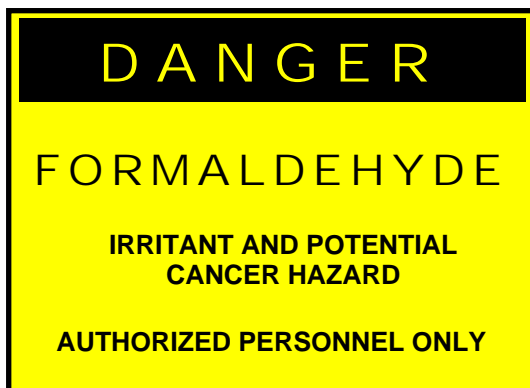


EH&S Fast Facts

SAFE USE OF FORMALDEHYDE



Formaldehyde is a colorless, flammable gas with a strong pungent odor. The aqueous solution formalin is 37-40% formaldehyde. Common uses of formalin and formaldehyde include tissue fixing/ preservation, disinfection, and fumigation.

Exposure to formaldehyde vapors can be irritating to the eyes, nose, and upper respiratory tract. In certain individuals, repeated skin exposure to the liquid can cause sensitization that may result in allergic dermatitis.

Minimizing Exposure to Formaldehyde for Health Protection

- **All work** with formalin must be done in a chemical fume hood
- Wear protective clothing (lab coat, gloves, safety goggles/ face shield)

Special Safety Precautions

- If formalin contacts the body/ eyes, flush the affected area with water for at least 15 minutes and report the incident to your supervisor immediately, who will arrange for transport to Riverside Industrial Medical or US Health Works when medical treatment is indicated or requested
- Contact lenses must **not** be worn in areas where formalin is used because trapped vapors can cause irritation to eyes. If contact lenses are required for medical reasons, contact EH&S at 827-5119
- **All solutions** of formalin and tissues preserved in formalin must be stored in tightly sealed containers to prevent leaks, spills, and airborne exposure
- **Don't** pour formalin waste into sinks, place in tightly sealed, labeled waste containers. Visit the EH&S web site (www.ehs.ucr.edu/programs/p2.aspx?id=54) to submit waste disposal requests or fax request form to 827-5122
- Small spills of diluted formalin solutions must be cleaned up immediately. Cover the spill with paper towels or other absorbent material. **Don't** mop a spill. Using a dust pan, scoop the absorbed formalin into a plastic bag (wear gloves/ eye protection), double bag, seal, and label the waste. Contact EH&S for pickup

Caution

- If the spill is large, evacuate area immediately; close all doors to contain vapors, and call EH&S during normal business hours, or **9-1-1** after hours. Be prepared to give the location of spill, approximate amount involved, name and phone number. Have someone wait for emergency response personnel outside building and direct them to the spill area

Formaldehyde is anticipated to be a human carcinogen. Visit www.ehs.ucr.edu for additional information or call EH&S at 827-5528 if you have any questions.