

Summary of NJ Hazardous Substance Fact Sheet: Vinyl Chloride

What is Vinyl Chloride?

Vinyl Chloride is a colorless gas, with a sweet odor at high concentrations that is usually handled as a liquid under pressure. It is used to make *Polyvinyl Chloride* for pipes, wire, and cable coatings, and in furniture, automobiles, and adhesives. Vapors are heavier than air and will stay close to the ground. *Do not rely on odor alone to determine potentially hazardous exposures. Individuals can become desensitized to the odor. The odor threshold for vinyl chloride is more than 3,000 ppm.*

Vinyl Chloride is EXTREMELY FLAMMABLE and REACTIVE and a DANGEROUS FIRE and EXPLOSION HAZARD. POISONOUS GASES ARE PRODUCED IN FIRE, including *Hydrogen Chloride* and *Phosgene*.

What are the Health Effects of Exposure?

Immediate health effects include: headache, nausea, vomiting, dizziness, fatigue, weakness and confusion. In extreme exposures, vinyl chloride can cause frostbite.

Long-term exposures can cause damage to the liver, lungs, and a rare form of liver cancer. It may cause reproductive damage.

What Should I do if I am Exposed?

Eye Contact

Immediately flush with large amounts of water for at least 30 minutes, lifting upper and lower lids. Remove contact lenses, if worn, while flushing. Seek medical attention.

Skin Contact

Immerse affected part in warm water. Seek medical attention.

Inhalation

- Remove the person from exposure.
- Begin rescue breathing (using universal precautions) if breathing has stopped and CPR if heart action has stopped.
- Transfer promptly to a medical facility.

Should I be Have Medical Testing?

You should seek advice from your doctor or a medical professional. If symptoms develop or belief of exposure is suspected, these tests are recommended: liver function tests, chest x-ray and lung function tests, and exams of the nervous system and skin.

Source: NJ Department of Health and Human Services, Right to Know, Hazardous Substance Fact Sheet for Vinyl Chloride. November 2010.



WEC is a nonprofit coalition of 70 labor, community, and environmental organizations working together for safe, secure jobs, and a healthy, sustainable environment. WEC links workers, communities, and environmentalists through training, technical assistance, grassroots organizing, and public policy campaigns to promote dialogue, collaboration, and joint action. Visit WEC on the web at www.njwec.org

Right to Know About Hazardous Chemicals in Your Community

Rail Cars*

There is no federal law that requires rail transport operators to disclose the contents of the rail car to the public. However, the **Federal Hazardous Materials Transportation Act** requires rail cars to be labeled with placards to indicate the type of chemical (but not necessarily the specific chemical) and its hazards – including whether it is flammable, explosive or toxic – for emergency response.

Industrial Facilities

The federal **Emergency Planning and Community Right to Know Act of 1986** establishes requirements for federal, state and local governments and industry regarding emergency planning and “Community Right to Know” reporting on hazardous and toxic chemicals. Some of these include:

- 1) the establishment of a State Emergency Response Commission and a Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC). In New Jersey, each county has a planning committee, and municipalities have the option to establish their own committee.
- 2) the LEPC must include, at a minimum, elected state and local officials, police, fire, civil defense, public health professionals, environmental, hospital, and transportation officials as well as representatives of facilities subject to emergency planning requirements, community groups, and the media.
- 3) an emergency response plan that:
 - Identifies facilities and transportation routes of extremely hazardous substances.
 - Describes emergency response procedures, on and off site.
 - Designates a community coordinator & facility emergency coordinator(s) to implement the plan.
 - Outlines emergency notification procedures.
 - Describes how to determine the probable affected area and population by releases.
 - Describes local emergency equipment and facilities and the persons responsible for them.
 - Outlines evacuation plans.
 - Describes a training program for emergency responders (including schedules).
 - Presents methods and schedules for exercising emergency response plans.

More information is available at: <http://www.epa.gov/oem/content/epcra/>

Public Access - The LEPC must publish a notice annually in the local newspaper indicating the availability and location of the information provided by the LEPC.

Under this law, facilities are also required to submit annually to the Environmental Protection Agency a Toxic Release Inventory (TRI) of chemicals that are emitted each year. That information is can be found at www.epa.gov/tri

The **New Jersey Worker and Community Right to Know Act** requires facilities to submit Right to Know Surveys that include an inventory of chemicals and environmental releases from hazardous facilities across the state. The information is available through the NJ Department of Environmental Protection online database or by submitting a request through the Open Public Records Act (OPRA).

*Source: *Hazardous Materials Compliance Manual*: www.fra.dot.gov/Elib/Details/L01184