



FACT SHEET

Formalin

Formalin is commonly used as a preservative in medical laboratories and mortuaries. It is also an effective fungicide, germicide and disinfectant. The most commonly used Formalin product at Capital Health is “Formalin, 10%, Neutral Buffered” which consists of 3-4% formaldehyde in water. Despite the low concentration of formaldehyde, precautions need to be taken to limit or prevent exposure as much as possible. Formalin should only be used in a well ventilated area and nitrile gloves should be worn at all times when handling this product. It is also very important to ensure that the MSDS for Formalin is readily available in the area where employees are working with this product.

Any incident involving Formalin needs to be reported and documented on the SAFE LINE at 473-7233.

The following procedures have been developed to deal with Formalin spills. In the event of a:

Splash in eyes:

- flush them immediately with water for 15 minutes, lifting the lower and upper lids occasionally
- Seek medical attention immediately

Skin exposure:

- Wash affected area immediately with soap and water
- Remove any contaminated clothing
- Seek medical attention promptly

Spill:

- Inform all other co-workers in the area
- Restrict access to the spill area
- Don appropriate personal protective equipment provided in formaldehyde spill kits to reduce exposure
- Encircle spill at perimeter with specific absorbent, applying inward making sure to cover spill evenly
- Allow absorbent to react for 5-15 minutes before being collected and bagged for disposal
- Seal the bags to minimize the release of vapors.
- Wash contaminated area twice with soap and water and thoroughly dry area with paper towel.

If the spill is large or is beyond the capabilities of the staff or the spill kit materials, please initiate a code brown by calling 473-3333.

NOTE: Formalin requires a specialized spill kit which contains a specific absorbent that neutralizes the spill and reduces exposure. It is important to equip each area where these products are regularly being used. A safe work procedure should also be developed to outline specific department requirements that are to be followed by all staff.