



Just the Facts

56-012-0593

Formaldehyde: New Exposure Standards



The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and the American Conference of Governmental Industrial Hygienists (ACGIH) have introduced new standards regulating worker exposure to formaldehyde. Both regulatory organizations have lessened their formaldehyde exposure limits for workers. OSHA's new standard also imposes stipulations for a comprehensive formaldehyde exposure program, including worker training and container labeling requirements.

What are the new reduced exposure limits?

This table depicts the reductions in OSHA's permissible exposure limit (PEL) and ACGIH's threshold limit value (TLV) for formaldehyde.

	Former Standard	New Standard
OSHA PEL	1.0 ppm 8-hour TWA	0.75 ppm 8-hour TWA
ACGIH TLV	1.0 ppm 8-hour TWA	0.3 ppm ceiling limit

TWA = time-weighted average

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Which exposure limit applies to the Army?

AR 40-5 mandates compliance with the more stringent standard - which is the ACGIH TLV for formaldehyde exposure.

Healthcare Hazards Program
 U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion and Preventive Medicine
 Aberdeen Proving Ground, MD 21010-5422
 DSN 584-3040 or Commercial 410-671-3040

What other requirements comprise the new OSHA standard?

Removal from exposure

The OSHA standard requires employers to establish a program to remove employees from the job if they suffer adverse health effects from formaldehyde exposure.

Labeling

According to OSHA, containers holding any form of formaldehyde must be labeled. This requirement extends to--

- Mixtures and solutions composed of 0.1 percent formaldehyde or greater.
- Materials capable of releasing formaldehyde in excess of 0.1 ppm.

OSHA requires that the label include the warning that formaldehyde levels exceeding 0.5 ppm pose a potential cancer hazard.

Worker training

OSHA requires that employers conduct training annually for workers exposed to formaldehyde concentrations of 0.1 ppm or greater.

When do these OSHA requirements become effective?

25 AUG 92

24 SEP 92

26 JUN 92

26 JUN 93

Periodic training for workers exposed to formaldehyde levels of 0.1 - 0.5 ppm	Proper respiratory protection to accommodate new exposure limits	"Hazard communication" and labeling requirements	Engineering and work practice controls to meet required PEL.
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What requirements pertaining to formaldehyde exposure were not changed in the new standard?

The new OSHA standard **does not** change the short-term exposure limit (STEL) of 2.0 ppm, or the action level of 0.5 ppm. The Army, however, adheres to the more stringent ACGIH ceiling of 0.3 ppm rather than the OSHA STEL or action level.