Information

Formaldehyde Safety

Applicability

This policy applies to the University Community (administrators, faculty, staff, and students) and visitors.

Administrative Authority

Senior Associate Vice President for Operations

Responsible Unit

Environmental Health & Safety
University of Louisville
Louisville, KY 40292
502.852.6670
dehs@louisville.edu

History

Revision Date(s):

Reviewed Date(s):

Categories

Statement:

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) regulates formaldehyde in the workplace. Accordingly, the University requires all employees potentially exposed to formaldehyde to complete a web-based training module informing them of the potential hazards, hazard controls, and when to contact DEHS staff for a follow-up evaluation.

Uses of formaldehyde commonly seen at the university include:

- Tissue preservation and in embalming fluids in; autopsy rooms, the pathology department, and laboratory specimens.
- Kidney dialysis units and as a sterilizing agent in central supply rooms.
- Some disinfectants and consumer products.

If a university employee finds or suspects potential exposure to formaldehyde, please contact DEHS at 502.852.2830.

Training

Formaldehyde's odor may be readily detected by some people. Many others, however, may not be able to smell it at all. Therefore, the sense of smell cannot be relied upon to warn workers. Rather, irritation of the: eyes, nose, bronchial tubes, and watering eyes may indicate exposure to formaldehyde more often than the sense of smell.

Please refer to the Training Module for more information:

- Formaldehyde Safety Training Module

Regulations

Please see the links below for the OSHA Standard and Regulations for formaldehyde:

- OSHA Standard 1910.1048
- OSHA Formaldehyde Safety & Health Topics

Definitions:

What is Formaldehyde?

Formaldehyde is a colorless, flammable gas with a strong, pungent odor. It is widely used in hospitals, laboratories and some disinfectants throughout the university. Formaldehyde is present in liquid form in an aqueous methanol solution called Formalin, which has a clear to milky appearance, and in solid polymer form as a white powder called Paraformaldehyde. **Formaldehyde gas may be given off by either liquid Formalin or Paraformaldehyde powder.**