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Material Safety Data Sheets Collection:

Sheet No. 440
Methane

Issued: 7/80

Revision: A. 8/89

Section 1. Material Identification

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Methane Description: Widely distributed in nature, methane comprises 0.00022% by volume of the earth's atmosphere. American natural gas is mostly methane (85%). At temperatures greater than 2012 °F (1100 °C), pure carbon combines with pure hydrogen to form methane. Above 2732 °F (1500 °C), the amount of methane produced increases with temperature. Obtained from sodium acetate and sodium hydroxide or from aluminum carbide and water. Commercially prepared from natural gas or by fermentation of cellulose and sewage sludge. Constituent of illuminating and cooking gas. Used in the manufacture of hydrogen, hydrogen cyanide, ammonia, acetylene, formaldehyde, and many other organics.

Other Designations: Fire damp; marsh gas; methyl hydride; CH₄; CAS No. 0074-82-8.

Manufacturer: Contact your supplier or distributor. Consult the latest *Chemicalweek Buyers' Guide* (Genium ref. 73) for a suppliers list.

R 1
I -
S -
K 4



NFPA

HMIS

H 1

F 4

R 0

PPG*

* Sec. 8

Section 2. Ingredients and Occupational Exposure Limits

Methane, ca 100%*

OSHA PEL

None established

ACGIH TLV, 1988-89

None established

NIOSH REL

None established

Toxicity Data†

Not listed

* Check with your supplier to determine the exact composition of the purchased methane. Possible contaminants are ethane (C₂H₆), propane (C₃H₈), butane (C₄H₁₀), higher molecular weight alkanes, carbon dioxide (CO₂), nitrogen (N₂), and oxygen (O₂).

† Monitor NIOSH, RTECS (PA1490000), for future toxicity data.

Section 3. Physical Data

Boiling Point: -259 °F (161.6 °C)

Water Solubility: Slight*

Vapor Density (Air = 1): 0.544 at 32 °F (0 °C)

Melting Point: -296.5 °F (-182.5 °C)

Molecular Weight: 16 g/mol

Appearance and Odor: A colorless, odorless, tasteless, extremely flammable gas. Commercial methane's trace amounts of a suitable mercaptan compound give it natural gas's familiar rotten egg smell.

*Soluble in alcohol and ether.

Section 4. Fire and Explosion Data

Flash Point: -213 °F (-136.11 °C)

Autoignition Temperature: 999 °F (537 °C)

LEL: 5% v/v*

UEL: 15% v/v*

Extinguishing Media: Methane's extreme flammability, extensive explosibility range, and very low flash point represent dangerous fire and explosion risks. *Treat any fire situation involving rapidly escaping and burning methane gas as an emergency.* Extinguish methane fires by shutting off the source of the gas. Use water sprays to cool fire-exposed containers and to protect the personnel attempting to seal the source of the escaping gas.

Unusual Fire or Explosion Hazards: Methane gas is very flammable with an extensive explosibility range. The best fire-fighting technique may be simply to let the burning gas escape from the pressurized cylinder, tank car, or pipelines. Never extinguish the burning gas without first locating and sealing its source. Otherwise, the still leaking gas could explosively re-ignite without warning and cause more damage than if it burned itself out.

Special Fire-fighting Procedures: Wear a self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) with a full facepiece operated in the pressure-demand or positive-pressure mode.

* The loudest methane-air explosions occur when 1 volume of methane is mixed with 10 volumes of air (or 2 volumes of oxygen). **Warning:** Air with more than 14% by volume methane burns *noiselessly*. Methane burns with a pale, faintly luminous, not always easily detected flame.

Section 5. Reactivity Data

Stability/Polymerization: Methane is stable at room temperature in closed, pressurized containers during routine operations. Hazardous polymerization cannot occur.

Chemical Incompatibilities: Genium reference 84 reports that methane can react violently with bromine pentafluoride, chlorine, chlorine dioxide, nitrogen trifluoride, liquid oxygen, and oxygen difluoride.

Conditions to Avoid: Never expose methane to ignition sources such as open flame, lighted cigarettes or pipes, uninsulated heating elements, or electrical or mechanical sparks. Prevent any accidental or uncontrollably rapid release of methane gas from high-pressure cylinders, tank cars, or pipelines.

Hazardous Products of Decomposition: Thermal oxidative degradation of methane can produce carbon dioxide and toxic carbon monoxide (CO).

Section 6. Health Hazard Data

Carcinogenicity: Neither the NTP, IARC, nor OSHA lists methane as a carcinogen. **Summary of Risks:** As a simple asphyxiant, methane does not cause significant physiological responses, but it can displace the minimum required atmospheric oxygen level. Significant displacement results in an oxygen-deficient atmosphere with no adequate warning properties. Asphyxiation can occur especially in confined, poorly ventilated, undisturbed spaces infrequently entered by workers. Frostbite (cryogenic damage) can result from contact with liquid methane's extremely low temperature. **Medical Conditions Aggravated by Long-Term Exposure:** None reported. **Target Organs:** None reported. **Primary Entry:** Inhalation. **Acute Effects:** The initial symptoms of simple asphyxiant gases's effects are rapid respiration and air hunger, diminished mental alertness, and impaired muscular coordination. Continuing lack of oxygen causes faulty judgement, depression of all sensations, rapid fatigue, emotional instability, nausea, vomiting, prostration, unconsciousness, and finally, convulsions, coma, and death. **Chronic Effects:** None reported.

FIRST AID

Skin: (Liquid methane): Promptly flush the affected area with lots of tepid/lukewarm water to reduce freezing of tissues. Never apply direct heat to frostbitten areas. Loosely apply dry, bulky dressings to protect the area from further injury. Get treatment from qualified medical personnel. **Inhalation:** Rescuers must consider their own safety when entering confined, poorly ventilated, oxygen-deficient areas. Self-contained breathing equipment must be readily available. Rescuers must use nonsparking tools and equipment; e.g., floodlights lowered into any incident area must be electrically grounded and bonded, shatter-resistant, and sparkproof. After first aid, get appropriate in-plant, paramedic, or community medical attention and support for inhalation exposures in oxygen-deficient atmospheres. Seek prompt medical assistance for further observation and treatment.

Section 7. Spill, Leak, and Disposal Procedures

Spill/Leak: Design and practice a methane spill control and countermeasure plan (SCCP). When a leak occurs, notify safety personnel, eliminate heat and ignition sources, evacuate unnecessary personnel, provide maximum explosion-proof ventilation, and implement the SCCP. Use only nonsparking tools and equipment. Locate and seal the source of the leaking gas. Use water sprays to protect the personnel attempting this shutoff. Large methane releases can result in spectacular explosions. If attempts to shut off the leaking gas are unsuccessful, evacuate the likely explosion area. **Disposal:** Contact your supplier or a licensed contractor for detailed recommendations. Follow applicable Federal, state, and local regulations. Remove leaking or defective cylinders to a safe, outside, posted, discharge location. Let the methane gas discharge at a moderate rate. When it is empty, return the cylinder to the supplier after it is properly tagged, labelled, or stenciled MT (empty) or defective.

OSHA Designations

Air Contaminant (29 CFR 1910.1000, Subpart Z): Not listed

EPA Designations

RCRA Hazardous Waste (40 CFR 261.33): Not listed

CERCLA Hazardous Substance (40 CFR 302.4): Not listed

SARA Extremely Hazardous Substance (40 CFR 355): Not listed

SARA Toxic Chemical (40 CFR 372.65): Not listed

Section 8. Special Protection Data

Goggles: Wear protective eyeglasses or chemical safety goggles, per OSHA eye- and face-protection regulations (29 CFR 1910.133). **Gloves:** To prevent skin contact, workers handling liquid methane should wear appropriate insulating gloves, safety glasses, and splash aprons, as required by the particular work conditions. **Respirator:** Wear a NIOSH-approved respirator if necessary. Follow OSHA respirator regulations (29 CFR 1910.134). For emergency or nonroutine operations (spills or cleaning reactor vessels and storage tanks), wear an SCBA. **Warning:** Air-purifying respirators do not protect workers in oxygen-deficient atmospheres; use self-contained breathing equipment there. **Ventilation:** Provide general and local explosion-proof ventilation systems to maintain airborne concentrations below the 5% v/v LEL (Sec. 4). Local exhaust ventilation is preferred since it prevents methane dispersion into the work area by eliminating it at its source (Genium ref. 103). Give special attention to proper ventilation of enclosed areas. **Safety Stations:** Make available in the work area emergency eyewash stations, safety/quick-drench showers, washing facilities, fire extinguishers, and oxygen bottles for emergency first-aid. **Contaminated Equipment:** Never wear contact lenses in the work area: soft lenses may absorb, and all lenses concentrate, irritants. Launder contaminated clothing before wearing. Remove this material from your shoes and equipment. **Other:** If appropriate, consider installing automatic sensing equipment that warns workers of oxygen-deficient atmospheres or of potentially explosive air-gas mixtures. All engineering systems in any methane gas storage, handling, or processing area must be explosion-proof so they have no spark potential or hot spots. Pressurized systems must use only approved valves, manifolds, flanges, and flame arrestors. **Comments:** Methane gas presents dangerous fire, explosion, and reactivity risks. Regularly inspect and service all the piping systems which transport methane gas in production and storage areas. Before use, thoroughly test methane lines with nitrogen gas for leaking, especially in enclosed areas.

Section 9. Special Precautions and Comments

Storage Requirements: Store methane in closed, pressurized cylinders, tank cars, pipelines, or other containers in a cool, dry, well-ventilated, fireproof area away from heat and ignition sources and incompatible chemicals (Sec. 5). Protect these containers from physical damage and heat. Shield them from direct sunlight. **Special Handling/Storage:** Electrically ground and bond all containers, tanks, cylinders, tank cars and pipelines used in methane shipping, receiving, or transferring operations. Never smoke in any work area where the possibility of exposure to methane gas (fire hazard) exists. Recommended storage containers include steel.

Transportation Data (49 CFR 172.101-2)

DOT Shipping Name: Methane

IMO Shipping Name: Methane, compressed

DOT Hazard Class: Flammable gas

IMO Hazard Class: 2.1

DOT ID No.: UN1971

IMO Label: Flammable gas

DOT Label: Flammable gas

DOT Packaging Requirements: 49 CFR 173.302

DOT Packaging Exceptions: 49 CFR 173.306

MSDS Collection References: 1, 6, 7, 84-94, 100, 116, 117, 119, 120, 122

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DO A 021940
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