



## Product Stewardship Summary

### Hydrochloric Acid

#### Summary

Hydrochloric acid is an important and widely used chemical. The largest end uses for hydrochloric acid are steel pickling, oil well acidizing, food manufacturing, producing calcium chloride, and ore processing. Hydrochloric acid is a corrosive liquid, and it must be stored and handled with this hazard in mind.

#### 1. Chemical Identity

Name: Hydrochloric acid  
Synonyms: Hydrogen chloride, Muriatic acid  
Chemical Abstracts Service (CAS) number: 7647-01-0  
Chemical Formula: HCl  
Molecular Weight: 36.46

#### 2. Production

Hydrochloric acid is an aqueous solution of hydrogen chloride gas. Hydrochloric acid is produced in the United States primarily by four basic methods: the chlorination of organic chemicals; the combination of hydrogen and chlorine; the salt-sulfuric acid production process; and, as a co-product in the manufacture of silica. Most hydrochloric acid is produced from the chlorination of organic chemicals with much smaller amounts derived from the other processes.

OxyChem produces hydrochloric acid by combining hydrogen and chlorine in "acid burners". The resulting hydrogen chloride gas is then absorbed in demineralized water to yield a high purity hydrochloric acid. OxyChem also markets hydrochloric acid produced by a number of other manufacturers. Generally, this material is a co-product from the production of other chemicals.

#### 3. Uses

Hydrochloric acid is an important and widely used chemical. The largest end uses for hydrochloric acid are steel pickling, oil well acidizing, food manufacturing, producing calcium chloride, and ore processing.

##### Steel pickling

Hydrochloric acid is used in pickling operations for carbon, alloy and stainless steels. Steel pickling is the process by which iron oxides and scale are removed from the surface of steel by converting the oxides to soluble compounds. Pickling is required for steel products that undergo further processing such as wire production, coating of sheet and strip, and tin mill products. Hydrochloric acid is used primarily for continuous pickling operations in which hot-rolled strip steel is passed through a countercurrent flow of acid solution.

In addition to steel pickling, hydrochloric acid is used in aluminum etching, metal prefixing for

galvanizing and soldering, and metal cleaning.

#### Oil well acidizing

Hydrochloric acid is used both to remove rust, scale and undesirable carbonate deposits in oil wells to encourage the flow of crude oil or gas to the well. This use is called "stimulation." Acidizing is generally done in carbonate or limestone formations by stimulation. An acid solution is injected into the formation, which dissolves a portion of the rock and creates a large pore structure in the formation, increasing its effective permeability and the flow of oil.

#### Food

The food industry uses hydrochloric acid in the processing of a variety of products. A major use of hydrochloric acid by the food industry is for the production of corn syrups such as high-fructose corn syrup (HFCS).

Much of the hydrochloric acid consumed in the HFCS industry is used to regenerate the ion exchange resins that are employed to remove impurities. Hydrochloric acid can also be used to acid-modify cornstarch and to adjust the pH of intermediates, final product and wastewater. The largest use of HFCS is in the production of soft drinks, which accounts for 70-75% of demand.

#### Other Food Uses

Hydrochloric acid is also used in other food processing applications, including the production of hydrolyzed vegetable protein and soy sauce. It is used in acidulating crushed bones for the manufacture of gelatin and as an acidifier for products such as sauces, vegetable juices and canned goods.

Hydrochloric acid is also consumed in the production of artificial sweeteners and in the production of lysine, choline chloride (both used primarily as animal feed additives) and citric acid.

#### Production of Calcium Chloride

Neutralizing hydrochloric acid with limestone ( $\text{CaCO}_3$ ) produces calcium chloride. The largest use for calcium chloride is highway deicing with production dependent on weather conditions. Other uses include dust control, industrial processing, oil recovery, concrete treatment and tire ballasting. Calcium chloride is also used in oil recovery products such as drilling muds and work over/completion fluids.

#### Ore Processing

Hydrochloric acid is consumed in many mining operations for ore treatment, extraction, separation, purification and water treatment. Significant quantities are used in the recovery of molybdenum and gold. Hydrochloric acid is used to convert high-grade scheelite concentrate ( $\text{CaWO}_4$ ) and crude sodium tungstate to tungstic acid, which in turn, can be used to produce tungsten metal and chemicals. Hydrochloric acid is also used in uranium and zirconium processing, solution mining of borate ores, as a pH regulator in the froth flotation of potash ores, and in rare earth extraction from bastnasite.

#### Other

Aqueous hydrochloric acid is used in a variety of miscellaneous applications, including the recovery of semiprecious metals from used catalysts, use as a catalyst in synthesis, use in catalyst regeneration, pH control, regeneration of ion exchange resins used in wastewater treatment and electric utilities, neutralization of alkaline products or waste materials, and in brine acidification for use in the production of chlorine and caustic soda.

Hydrochloric acid is also used in many other production processes for organic chemicals. It can be used in the production of p-phenylenediamine, polycarbonate resins, bisphenol A, polyvinyl chloride resins, and ethanol (from ethylene).

The pharmaceutical industry consumes hydrochloric acid as a catalyst in synthesis, for pH control, for deionization of water and as a reduction agent (*e.g.*, in the production of ascorbic acid and para-aminobenzoic acid).

Numerous other uses of hydrochloric acid include the manufacture of dyes and pigments; the removal of sludge and scale from industrial equipment; the deliming, tanning and dyeing of hides by the leather industry; manufacture of permanent wave lotion; the carbonizing of wool; use as a bleaching and dyeing assistant in the textile industry; and the purification of sand and clay.

#### **4. Physical and Chemical Properties**

##### Corrosivity

Hydrochloric acid is very corrosive to the skin and mucous membranes and can cause severe burns to any part of the body. The corneas of the eyes are especially sensitive to hydrochloric acid and exposure to it or its vapors immediately causes severe irritation. If the eyes are not quickly and thoroughly irrigated with water, partial or total visual impairment or blindness can occur.

##### Reactivity

Hydrochloric acid is extremely corrosive to metals, including the following: carbon steel, stainless steel, nickel, Monel<sup>1</sup>, bronze, brass, copper, Inconel<sup>1</sup>, and aluminum. These are commonly used industrial materials. Great care should be taken to avoid contact of these materials with hydrochloric acid.

Hydrochloric acid is shipped in rubber-lined tank cars or tank trucks. It is most commonly stored either in rubber-lined steel storage tanks or in fiberglass-reinforced plastic storage tanks. Choosing the correct material of construction for piping, hoses, pumps, valves and other equipment is also very important to extend the life of the equipment, prevent corrosion, and prevent leaks.

In addition, considerable heat is generated when hydrochloric acid is mixed with water, which can result in boiling or splattering. When diluting, always add hydrochloric acid to water; never add water to hydrochloric acid.

#### **5. Health Effects**

Hydrochloric acid solutions are acidic solutions, meaning they have low pH. For example, the pH of a 0.2% solution is 2. This property means hydrochloric acid is a severe eye, skin, and respiratory tract irritant, and it can burn any tissue with which it comes in contact:

- Eye splashes are especially serious hazards. Contact with the eyes can cause severe irritation, pain, and corneal burns possibly leading to blindness.
- Direct contact with the skin may cause severe burns if the material is not quickly rinsed away with large amounts of water.
- Inhaling mists of hydrochloric acid may result in irritation of the nose and throat with symptoms such as burning, coughing, choking and pain. Inhaling concentrated mist may result in pulmonary edema and shock. Prolonged exposure to mists may result in erosion or discoloration of the teeth.
- Ingesting hydrochloric acid may cause pain and burns of the esophagus and gastrointestinal tract. Ingestion can lead to corrosion of the mucous membranes of the upper part of the

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<sup>1</sup> Trademark of International Nickel Company

digestive tract. Death may result from shock, perforation of the esophagus, aspiration from the esophagus into the trachea (asphyxia), or infection from the corroded tissues.

Hydrochloric acid is not classified as a carcinogen by the National Toxicology Program (NTP), the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), or the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA).

## **6. Environmental Effects**

Hydrochloric acid is moderately toxic to aquatic organisms. It dissociates in water and can lower the pH of systems that are not well buffered. Since it contains no degradable functional groups, it exerts no biological oxygen demand.

## **7. Exposure**

Hydrochloric acid is corrosive to the skin and eyes. The most likely ways exposures could occur are:

- Worker exposure – Exposure could occur in the manufacturing facility or in industrial facilities that use hydrochloric acid. When exposures occur, they are typically skin or eye exposures. Good industrial hygiene practices and the use of personal protective equipment minimize the risk of exposure.
- Consumer exposure – OxyChem does not sell Hydrochloric acid in retail stores.
- Releases – If a spill occurs, emergency personnel should wear protective equipment to minimize exposures.

## **8. Recommended Risk Management Measures**

Hydrochloric acid is non-flammable, non-explosive, and non-toxic. It is, however, an acidic material and poses hazards to the skin and eyes. Hydrochloric acid can react with certain materials of construction. Prior to using hydrochloric acid, carefully read and comprehend the Material Safety Data Sheet. The following are some risk management measures that are effective against these hazards:

- Provide eyewash fountains and safety showers in areas where hydrochloric acid is used or handled. Any hydrochloric acid burn may be serious. Flush areas that have come in contact with hydrochloric acid with large amounts of water, and then seek medical attention. DO NOT use any kind of neutralizing solution, particularly in the eyes, without direction by a physician.
- To prevent eye contact, protective eye wear (such as splash goggles, a full face shield, or safety glasses with side shields) must be worn.
- Work areas where hydrochloric acid is used should be well ventilated to maintain concentrations below exposure limits. If exposures exceed accepted limits or if respiratory discomfort is experienced, use a NIOSH approved air purifying respirator with acid gas cartridges.
- Wear chemical resistant clothing to prevent contact with the body.
- While handling hydrochloric acid, wear rubber gloves to protect the hands and rubber boots to protect the feet. Gloves should be long enough to come well above the wrist, and sleeves should be positioned over the glove wrists. Wear the bottoms of trouser legs outside the boots. DO NOT tuck the trouser legs into the boots.

- Residues that dry on equipment can cause irritation. Keep equipment clean by washing off any accumulation.
- Proper labeling, handling and storage of hydrochloric acid will reduce the likelihood of accidental ingestion.
- Equipment used for hydrochloric acid storage or processing should be constructed of the proper materials. For more detailed information regarding materials of construction, refer to the OxyChem Handbook.
- When making solutions, always add the hydrochloric acid slowly to the surface of the water with constant agitation. Never add the water to the hydrochloric acid. Dangerous boiling or splattering can occur if hydrochloric acid is added too rapidly or allowed to concentrate in one area. Care must be taken to avoid these situations.
- Personnel involved with hydrochloric acid handling operations should be properly trained. For detailed recommendations regarding personnel involved in unloading hydrochloric acid, refer to the OxyChem Handbook.

## 9. Product Stewardship Programs

A product handbook prepared by OxyChem is available for hydrochloric acid. The handbook includes extensive physical property and technical data regarding the product. In addition, specific information for storing, unloading, preparing and using hydrochloric acid safely is provided, including data on materials of construction and equipment recommendations.

## 10. Regulatory Compliance Information

The following is a summary of regulations and guidelines that may pertain to hydrochloric acid (additional regulations and guidelines may apply):

- Hydrochloric acid is listed as a Hazardous Air Pollutant in Section 112(b) of the Clean Air Act.
- Hydrochloric acid is designated as a hazardous substance under Section 311(b) (2) of the Clean Water Act. See 40 CFR 116.4.
- A release of hydrochloric acid in an amount greater than the Reportable Quantity (RQ) is subject to reporting under Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act, Section 103. The RQ for hydrochloric acid is 5000 pounds. See 40 CFR 302.4.
- The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has identified hydrochloric acid as a chemical of interest. Facilities that possess quantities in excess of the Screening Threshold Quantity (STQ) must submit a Top-Screen to aid the DHS in determining if the facility presents a high level of security risk. The STQ for hydrochloric acid is 500 pounds.
- Possible Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (hazardous waste) Codes: D002
- Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA) - Residues of hydrochloric acid are exempted from the requirement of a tolerance test when used as a solvent or neutralizer, in accordance with good agricultural practices as an inert (or occasionally active) ingredient in pesticide formulations applied to growing crops or to raw agricultural commodities after harvest. See 40 CFR 180.910.
- Food and Drug Administration (FDA) – Hydrochloric acid used as a buffer and neutralizing agent in animal drugs, feeds, and related products is generally recognized as safe when used in accordance with good manufacturing or feeding practice. See 21 CFR 582.1057.

- FDA - Hydrochloric acid used as a buffer and neutralizing agent in food for human consumption is generally recognized as safe when used in accordance with good manufacturing practice. See 21 CFR 182.1057.
- Hydrochloric acid is subject to the reporting requirements established by Section 313 of EPA's Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-know Act (EPCRA). These reports are often called Form R reports. The forms of hydrochloric acid that are reportable are acid aerosols including mists, vapors, gas, fog, and other airborne forms of any particle size. See 40 CFR 372.
- The gaseous form of hydrochloric acid is listed as an Extremely Hazardous Substance in 40 CFR 355, Appendix A. It is subject to inventory reporting requirements under Section 311 and/or Section 312 of EPCRA. The threshold planning quantity for gaseous hydrochloric acid is 500 pounds.
- The anhydrous form of hydrochloric acid is listed as a highly hazardous substance in the OSHA process safety management standard. The threshold quantity is 5000 pounds. See 29 CFR 1910.119.
- Hydrochloric acid is regulated by the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT). The DOT identification number is UN 1789.
- The Occupational Safety and Health Administration has established a Permissible Exposure Limit for hydrochloric acid. The limit is 5 parts per million (ppm) as a ceiling limit.
- The American Conference of Governmental Industrial Hygienists has established a Threshold Limit Value for hydrochloric acid. The guideline is 2 ppm as a ceiling limit.
- The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health has established an Immediately Dangerous to Life and Health concentration for hydrochloric acid. The concentration is 50 ppm.

## 11. Sources for Additional Information

ACGIH Documentation of the Threshold Limit Values and Biological Exposure Indices, 6th ed., 1 (1991), Hydrogen Chloride and corresponding entry in "Pocket Guide" 1997-1998.

Hazardous Substances Data Bank (HSDB), HSDB Number 545, Last revision date: June 24, 2005.

OxyChem Product Handbook web site:

[http://www.oxy.com/OurBusinesses/Chemicals/Products/Pages/ChlorineandDerivatives.aspx#chem\\_hcl](http://www.oxy.com/OurBusinesses/Chemicals/Products/Pages/ChlorineandDerivatives.aspx#chem_hcl)

OxyChem Material Safety Data Sheet web site: <http://msds.oxy.com/>

**12. Contact Information:** For additional information, call 1-800-752-5151 or 1-972-404-3700.

**13. Preparation Date:** 12/12/2008 **Revised:** 02/19/2013

This Product Stewardship Summary is intended to give general information about the product discussed above. It is not intended to provide an in-depth discussion of all health and safety information about the product or to replace any required regulatory communications.

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