

TOXICOLOGICAL PROFILE FOR CYANIDE

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Public Health Service
Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry

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DISCLAIMER

The use of company or product name(s) is for identification only and does not imply endorsement by the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry.

UPDATE STATEMENT

A Toxicological Profile for Cyanide, Draft for Public Comment was released in September 2004. This edition supersedes any previously released draft or final profile.

Toxicological profiles are revised and republished as necessary. For information regarding the update status of previously released profiles, contact ATSDR at:

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FOREWORD

This toxicological profile is prepared in accordance with guidelines developed by the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The original guidelines were published in the *Federal Register* on April 17, 1987. Each profile will be revised and republished as necessary.

The ATSDR toxicological profile succinctly characterizes the toxicologic and adverse health effects information for the hazardous substance described therein. Each peer-reviewed profile identifies and reviews the key literature that describes a hazardous substance's toxicologic properties. Other pertinent literature is also presented, but is described in less detail than the key studies. The profile is not intended to be an exhaustive document; however, more comprehensive sources of specialty information are referenced.

The focus of the profiles is on health and toxicologic information; therefore, each toxicological profile begins with a public health statement that describes, in nontechnical language, a substance's relevant toxicological properties. Following the public health statement is information concerning levels of significant human exposure and, where known, significant health effects. The adequacy of information to determine a substance's health effects is described in a health effects summary. Data needs that are of significance to protection of public health are identified by ATSDR and EPA.

Each profile includes the following:

- (A) The examination, summary, and interpretation of available toxicologic information and epidemiologic evaluations on a hazardous substance to ascertain the levels of significant human exposure for the substance and the associated acute, subacute, and chronic health effects;
- (B) A determination of whether adequate information on the health effects of each substance is available or in the process of development to determine levels of exposure that present a significant risk to human health of acute, subacute, and chronic health effects; and
- (C) Where appropriate, identification of toxicologic testing needed to identify the types or levels of exposure that may present significant risk of adverse health effects in humans.

The principal audiences for the toxicological profiles are health professionals at the Federal, State, and local levels; interested private sector organizations and groups; and members of the public.

This profile reflects ATSDR's assessment of all relevant toxicologic testing and information that has been peer-reviewed. Staff of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and other Federal scientists have also reviewed the profile. In addition, this profile has been peer-reviewed by a nongovernmental panel and was made available for public review. Final responsibility for the contents and views expressed in this toxicological profile resides with ATSDR.


Julie Louise Gerberding, M.D., M.P.H.
Administrator
Agency for Toxic Substances and
Disease Registry

*Legislative Background

The toxicological profiles are developed in response to the Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act (SARA) of 1986 (Public Law 99 499) which amended the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act of 1980 (CERCLA or Superfund). This public law directed ATSDR to prepare toxicological profiles for hazardous substances most commonly found at facilities on the CERCLA National Priorities List and that pose the most significant potential threat to human health, as determined by ATSDR and the EPA. The availability of the revised priority list of 275 hazardous substances was announced in the Federal Register on December 7, 2005 (70 FR 72840). For prior versions of the list of substances, see Federal Register notices dated April 17, 1987 (52 FR 12866); October 20, 1988 (53 FR 41280); October 26, 1989 (54 FR 43619); October 17, 1990 (55 FR 42067); October 17, 1991 (56 FR 52166); October 28, 1992 (57 FR 48801); February 28, 1994 (59 FR 9486); April 29, 1996 (61 FR 18744); November 17, 1997 (62 FR 61332); October 21, 1999 (64 FR 56792); October 25, 2001 (66 FR 54014) and November 7, 2003 (68 FR 63098). Section 104(i)(3) of CERCLA, as amended, directs the Administrator of ATSDR to prepare a toxicological profile for each substance on the list.

QUICK REFERENCE FOR HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS

Toxicological Profiles are a unique compilation of toxicological information on a given hazardous substance. Each profile reflects a comprehensive and extensive evaluation, summary, and interpretation of available toxicologic and epidemiologic information on a substance. Health care providers treating patients potentially exposed to hazardous substances will find the following information helpful for fast answers to often-asked questions.

Primary Chapters/Sections of Interest

Chapter 1: Public Health Statement: The Public Health Statement can be a useful tool for educating patients about possible exposure to a hazardous substance. It explains a substance's relevant toxicologic properties in a nontechnical, question-and-answer format, and it includes a review of the general health effects observed following exposure.

Chapter 2: Relevance to Public Health: The Relevance to Public Health Section evaluates, interprets, and assesses the significance of toxicity data to human health.

Chapter 3: Health Effects: Specific health effects of a given hazardous compound are reported by type of health effect (death, systemic, immunologic, reproductive), by route of exposure, and by length of exposure (acute, intermediate, and chronic). In addition, both human and animal studies are reported in this section.

NOTE: Not all health effects reported in this section are necessarily observed in the clinical setting. Please refer to the Public Health Statement to identify general health effects observed following exposure.

Pediatrics: Four new sections have been added to each Toxicological Profile to address child health issues:

Section 1.6 **How Can (Chemical X) Affect Children?**
Section 1.7 **How Can Families Reduce the Risk of Exposure to (Chemical X)?**
Section 3.7 **Children's Susceptibility**
Section 6.6 **Exposures of Children**

Other Sections of Interest:

Section 3.8 **Biomarkers of Exposure and Effect**
Section 3.11 **Methods for Reducing Toxic Effects**

ATSDR Information Center

Phone: 1-888-42-ATSDR or (404) 498-0110 **Fax:** (770) 488-4178
E-mail: atsdric@cdc.gov **Internet:** <http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov>

The following additional material can be ordered through the ATSDR Information Center:

Case Studies in Environmental Medicine: Taking an Exposure History—The importance of taking an exposure history and how to conduct one are described, and an example of a thorough exposure history is provided. Other case studies of interest include *Reproductive and Developmental*

Hazards; Skin Lesions and Environmental Exposures; Cholinesterase-Inhibiting Pesticide Toxicity; and numerous chemical-specific case studies.

Managing Hazardous Materials Incidents is a three-volume set of recommendations for on-scene (prehospital) and hospital medical management of patients exposed during a hazardous materials incident. Volumes I and II are planning guides to assist first responders and hospital emergency department personnel in planning for incidents that involve hazardous materials. Volume III—*Medical Management Guidelines for Acute Chemical Exposures*—is a guide for health care professionals treating patients exposed to hazardous materials.

Fact Sheets (ToxFAQs) provide answers to frequently asked questions about toxic substances.

Other Agencies and Organizations

The National Center for Environmental Health (NCEH) focuses on preventing or controlling disease, injury, and disability related to the interactions between people and their environment outside the workplace. Contact: NCEH, Mailstop F-29, 4770 Buford Highway, NE, Atlanta, GA 30341-3724 • Phone: 770-488-7000 • FAX: 770-488-7015.

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) conducts research on occupational diseases and injuries, responds to requests for assistance by investigating problems of health and safety in the workplace, recommends standards to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA), and trains professionals in occupational safety and health. Contact: NIOSH, 200 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20201 • Phone: 800-356-4674 or NIOSH Technical Information Branch, Robert A. Taft Laboratory, Mailstop C-19, 4676 Columbia Parkway, Cincinnati, OH 45226-1998 • Phone: 800-35-NIOSH.

The National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS) is the principal federal agency for biomedical research on the effects of chemical, physical, and biologic environmental agents on human health and well-being. Contact: NIEHS, PO Box 12233, 104 T.W. Alexander Drive, Research Triangle Park, NC 27709 • Phone: 919-541-3212.

Referrals

The Association of Occupational and Environmental Clinics (AOEC) has developed a network of clinics in the United States to provide expertise in occupational and environmental issues. Contact: AOEC, 1010 Vermont Avenue, NW, #513, Washington, DC 20005 • Phone: 202-347-4976 • FAX: 202-347-4950 • e-mail: AOEC@AOEC.ORG • Web Page: <http://www.aoec.org/>.

The American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine (ACOEM) is an association of physicians and other health care providers specializing in the field of occupational and environmental medicine. Contact: ACOEM, 25 Northwest Point Boulevard, Suite 700, Elk Grove Village, IL 60007-1030 • Phone: 847-818-1800 • FAX: 847-818-9266.

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THE PROFILE HAS UNDERGONE THE FOLLOWING ATSDR INTERNAL REVIEWS:

1. Health Effects Review. The Health Effects Review Committee examines the health effects chapter of each profile for consistency and accuracy in interpreting health effects and classifying end points.
2. Minimal Risk Level Review. The Minimal Risk Level Workgroup considers issues relevant to substance-specific Minimal Risk Levels (MRLs), reviews the health effects database of each profile, and makes recommendations for derivation of MRLs.
3. Data Needs Review. The Research Implementation Branch reviews data needs sections to assure consistency across profiles and adherence to instructions in the Guidance.
4. Green Border Review. Green Border review assures the consistency with ATSDR policy.

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PEER REVIEW

A peer review panel was assembled for cyanide. The panel consisted of the following members:

1. Dr. Arthur Gregory, President, Techto Enterprises, Luray, Virginia;
2. Dr. Maryce Jacobs, President, Health Sciences Institute, Incorporated, Solomons, Maryland; and
3. Dr. James Withey, Environmental Health Center Canada, Retired, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada.

These experts collectively have knowledge of cyanide's physical and chemical properties, toxicokinetics, key health end points, mechanisms of action, human and animal exposure, and quantification of risk to humans. All reviewers were selected in conformity with the conditions for peer review specified in Section 104(I)(13) of the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act, as amended.

Scientists from the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) have reviewed the peer reviewers' comments and determined which comments will be included in the profile. A listing of the peer reviewers' comments not incorporated in the profile, with a brief explanation of the rationale for their exclusion, exists as part of the administrative record for this compound.

The citation of the peer review panel should not be understood to imply its approval of the profile's final content. The responsibility for the content of this profile lies with the ATSDR.

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CONTENTS

DISCLAIMER	ii
UPDATE STATEMENT	iii
FOREWORD	v
QUICK REFERENCE FOR HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS.....	vii
CONTRIBUTORS	ix
PEER REVIEW	xi
CONTENTS.....	xiii
LIST OF FIGURES	xvii
LIST OF TABLES	xix
1. PUBLIC HEALTH STATEMENT.....	1
1.1 WHAT IS CYANIDE?	1
1.2 WHAT HAPPENS TO CYANIDE WHEN IT ENTERS THE ENVIRONMENT?.....	3
1.3 HOW MIGHT I BE EXPOSED TO CYANIDE?	4
1.4 HOW CAN CYANIDE ENTER AND LEAVE MY BODY?	6
1.5 HOW CAN CYANIDE AFFECT MY HEALTH?	6
1.6 HOW CAN CYANIDE AFFECT CHILDREN?	8
1.7 HOW CAN FAMILIES REDUCE THE RISK OF EXPOSURE TO CYANIDE?	9
1.8 IS THERE A MEDICAL TEST TO DETERMINE WHETHER I HAVE BEEN EXPOSED TO CYANIDE?	9
1.9 WHAT RECOMMENDATIONS HAS THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT MADE TO PROTECT HUMAN HEALTH?.....	10
1.10 WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION?	11
2. RELEVANCE TO PUBLIC HEALTH	13
2.1 BACKGROUND AND ENVIRONMENTAL EXPOSURES TO CYANIDE IN THE UNITED STATES.....	13
2.2 SUMMARY OF HEALTH EFFECTS	14
2.3 MINIMAL RISK LEVELS (MRLs)	18
3. HEALTH EFFECTS	25
3.1 INTRODUCTION	25
3.2 DISCUSSION OF HEALTH EFFECTS BY ROUTE OF EXPOSURE	25
3.2.1 Inhalation Exposure	27
3.2.1.1 Death	27
3.2.1.2 Systemic Effects	28
3.2.1.3 Immunological and Lymphoreticular Effects.....	39
3.2.1.4 Neurological Effects	40
3.2.1.5 Reproductive Effects	42
3.2.1.6 Developmental Effects	42
3.2.1.7 Cancer.....	42
3.2.2 Oral Exposure.....	42
3.2.2.1 Death	42
3.2.2.2 Systemic Effects	43
3.2.2.3 Immunological and Lymphoreticular Effects.....	59
3.2.2.4 Neurological Effects	59
3.2.2.5 Reproductive Effects	63

3.2.2.6	Developmental Effects	64
3.2.2.7	Cancer	65
3.2.3	Dermal Exposure	66
3.2.3.1	Death	66
3.2.3.2	Systemic Effects	66
3.2.3.3	Immunological and Lymphoreticular Effects	71
3.2.3.4	Neurological Effects	71
3.2.3.5	Reproductive Effects	72
3.2.3.6	Developmental Effects	72
3.2.3.7	Cancer	72
3.3	GENOTOXICITY	72
3.4	TOXICOKINETICS	75
3.4.1	Absorption	75
3.4.1.1	Inhalation Exposure	75
3.4.1.2	Oral Exposure	76
3.4.1.3	Dermal Exposure	77
3.4.2	Distribution	77
3.4.2.1	Inhalation Exposure	77
3.4.2.2	Oral Exposure	78
3.4.2.3	Dermal Exposure	79
3.4.3	Metabolism	80
3.4.4	Elimination and Excretion	84
3.4.4.1	Inhalation Exposure	84
3.4.4.2	Oral Exposure	84
3.4.4.3	Dermal Exposure	85
3.4.5	Physiologically Based Pharmacokinetic (PBPK)/Pharmacodynamic (PD) Models	85
3.5	MECHANISMS OF ACTION	87
3.5.1	Pharmacokinetic Mechanisms	88
3.5.2	Mechanisms of Toxicity	90
3.5.3	Animal-to-Human Extrapolations	98
3.6	TOXICITIES MEDIATED THROUGH THE NEUROENDOCRINE AXIS	99
3.7	CHILDREN'S SUSCEPTIBILITY	100
3.8	BIOMARKERS OF EXPOSURE AND EFFECT	103
3.8.1	Biomarkers Used to Identify or Quantify Exposure to Cyanide	104
3.8.2	Biomarkers Used to Characterize Effects Caused by Cyanide	106
3.9	INTERACTIONS WITH OTHER CHEMICALS	107
3.10	POPULATIONS THAT ARE UNUSUALLY SUSCEPTIBLE	111
3.11	METHODS FOR REDUCING TOXIC EFFECTS	112
3.11.1	Reducing Peak Absorption Following Exposure	113
3.11.2	Reducing Body Burden	113
3.11.3	Interfering with the Mechanism of Action for Toxic Effects	114
3.12	ADEQUACY OF THE DATABASE	118
3.12.1	Existing Information on Health Effects of Cyanide	118
3.12.2	Identification of Data Needs	120
3.12.3	Ongoing Studies	128
4.	CHEMICAL AND PHYSICAL INFORMATION	130
4.1	CHEMICAL IDENTITY	131
4.2	PHYSICAL AND CHEMICAL PROPERTIES	131

5. PRODUCTION, IMPORT/EXPORT, USE, AND DISPOSAL	141
5.1 PRODUCTION	141
5.2 IMPORT/EXPORT	146
5.3 USE.....	146
5.4 DISPOSAL.....	149
6. POTENTIAL FOR HUMAN EXPOSURE	153
6.1 OVERVIEW.....	153
6.2 RELEASES TO THE ENVIRONMENT	157
6.2.1 Air	158
6.2.2 Water.....	159
6.2.3 Soil	165
6.3 ENVIRONMENTAL FATE.....	166
6.3.1 Transport and Partitioning.....	166
6.3.2 Transformation and Degradation	169
6.3.2.1 Air.....	169
6.3.2.2 Water	172
6.3.2.3 Sediment and Soil.....	176
6.4 LEVELS MONITORED OR ESTIMATED IN THE ENVIRONMENT	177
6.4.1 Air	178
6.4.2 Water.....	178
6.4.3 Sediment and Soil	181
6.4.4 Other Environmental Media.....	182
6.5 GENERAL POPULATION AND OCCUPATIONAL EXPOSURE	186
6.6 EXPOSURES OF CHILDREN	191
6.7 POPULATIONS WITH POTENTIALLY HIGH EXPOSURES	192
6.8 ADEQUACY OF THE DATABASE.....	193
6.8.1 Identification of Data Needs	194
6.8.2 Ongoing Studies	199
7. ANALYTICAL METHODS	201
7.1 BIOLOGICAL MATERIALS.....	201
7.2 ENVIRONMENTAL SAMPLES.....	206
7.3 ADEQUACY OF THE DATABASE.....	217
7.3.1 Identification of Data Needs	217
7.3.2 Ongoing Studies	219
8. REGULATIONS AND ADVISORIES	220
9. REFERENCES	229
10. GLOSSARY	291

APPENDICES

A. ATSDR MINIMAL RISK LEVELS AND WORKSHEETS A-1

B. USER’S GUIDE..... B-1

C. ACRONYMS, ABBREVIATIONS, AND SYMBOLS..... C-1

D. INDEX D-1

LIST OF FIGURES

3-1. Levels of Significant Exposure to Cyanide—Inhalation	33
3-2. Levels of Significant Exposure to Cyanide—Oral	50
3-3. Basic Processes Involved in the Metabolism of Cyanide	81
3-4. Minor Path for the Removal of Cyanide from the Body	83
3-5. Conceptual Representation of a Physiologically Based Pharmacokinetic (PBPK) Model for a Hypothetical Chemical Substance	87
3-6. Existing Information on Health Effects of Cyanide	119
6-1. Frequency of NPL Sites with Cyanide Contamination.....	154

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LIST OF TABLES

3-1. Levels of Significant Exposure to Cyanide—Inhalation	29
3-2. Levels of Significant Exposure to Cyanide—Oral	44
3-3. Levels of Significant Exposure to Cyanide—Dermal	67
3-4. Genotoxicity of Cyanide <i>In Vitro</i>	74
4-1. Chemical Identity of Cyanide and Compounds.....	132
4-2. Physical and Chemical Properties of Cyanide and Compounds.....	135
5-1. Facilities that Produce, Process, or Use Hydrogen Cyanide.....	143
5-2. Facilities that Produce, Process, or Use Cyanide Compounds	144
5-3. Import and Export Volumes of Cyanide Compounds in 2004	147
6-1. Releases to the Environment from Facilities that Produce, Process, or Use Hydrogen Cyanide	160
6-2. Releases to the Environment from Facilities that Produce, Process, or Use Cyanide Compounds.....	162
6-3. Environmental Transformation Products of Cyanide Compounds by Medium	170
6-4. Cyanide and Thiocyanate Concentrations ($\mu\text{g}/\text{mL}$) in Smokers and Nonsmokers	190
7-1. Analytical Methods for Determining Cyanide in Biological Samples	202
7-2. Analytical Methods for Determining Biomarkers for Cyanide	207
7-3. Analytical Methods for Determining Cyanide in Environmental Samples	208
7-4. Analytical Methods for Determining Environmental Degradation Products of Cyanide.....	215
8-1. Regulations and Guidelines Applicable to Cyanide and Cyanide Compounds.....	222