Formaldehyde is used widely at Cornell University, primarily in laboratories and at the Cornell Veterinary College as a tissue preservative. Exposure to this chemical occurs primarily by inhaling formaldehyde gas/vapor or by absorbing liquids containing formaldehyde through the skin. Formaldehyde can cause watery eyes, burning sensations in the eyes and throat, nausea, and difficulty breathing when exposed to elevated levels (above 0.1 ppm). In 2011, the National Toxicology Program named formaldehyde as a known human carcinogen.

**FORMALDEHYDE SPECIFICATIONS**

- Formaldehyde is found in; preservatives in medical labs, chemicals, particle board, glues, permanent press fabrics, paper product coatings, fiberboard, and plywood, industrial fungicide, germicide, and disinfectant
- All workers shall be protected from exposures to formaldehyde.
- Cornell University staff and student exposures to formaldehyde must be reviewed by Cornell University EHS.
- All containers must be appropriately labeled if they contain formaldehyde.
- All affected staff shall be trained annually on formaldehyde safety.

**ROUTES OF EXPOSURE AND HEALTH EFFECTS**

- The primary route of formaldehyde exposure is through inhalation as a gas or vapor, or the absorption through the skin.
- Liquids containing 1% or more of formaldehyde shall be prevented from contacting skin and eyes through proper personal protective equipment (PPE).

**EMPLOYER REQUIREMENTS**

- Emergency eye wash stations and showers shall be available where formaldehyde is present.
- Label all solutions containing greater than 0.1% formaldehyde, and materials capable of releasing formaldehyde into the air at or exceeding 0.1ppm.
- Materials capable of releasing formaldehyde at 0.5ppm or greater during normal use must have a label stating that it is a potential cancer hazard.
- Cornell EHS will maintain an accurate record of the measurements taken to monitor employee exposures.
- Select, provide, and maintain proper PPE. Impervious clothing, gloves, aprons, chemical splash goggles are all examples of proper PPE. At a minimum - safety glasses and disposable gloves are required when handling formaldehyde.

**TRAINING**

- All employees assigned to workplaces where there is an exposure hazard from formaldehyde shall participate in annual formaldehyde awareness training and read the formaldehyde Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS).

Contact EHS @ 255-8200 for any further questions, to request training, and to report large spills.