



Iowa Department of Public Health Division of Environmental Health

Fuel Oil Fact Sheet

Overview: TEH-diesel, or fuel oil, is commonly used to power equipment and produce heat. Other names for fuel oil include: TEH-Diesel, diesel oil, diesel fuel, number 2 diesel, home heating oil, range oil, heating oil, kerosene, and jet fuel.

How are people exposed to fuel oil?

The most likely way for someone to be exposed to fuel oil is by breathing in vapors from fuel oils.

Sometimes, fuel oils can get into water below ground. This can happen if fuel leaks out from where it's being stored into the ground. Leaking underground and above ground storage tanks can be common sources of groundwater pollution. Some of this groundwater may be used for drinking water.

To know if you've been exposed to a chemical, ask yourself the following questions:

1. Did I breathe it in?
2. Did I touch it?
3. Did I swallow it?

If you answered "no" to all three questions, you were not exposed.

How does exposure to fuel oil affect my health?

Little information is available about the health effects that may be caused by fuel oil.

Breathing some fuel oils for short periods may cause nausea, increased blood pressure, headache, and light-headedness. Breathing diesel fuel vapors for long periods may cause kidney damage and lower your blood's ability to clot.

The health impact from exposure to fuel oil may vary from person to person. In general, chemicals affect the same organs in all people who are exposed.

If you come in contact with a chemical, the amount and length of time can affect your reaction.

How you react to a chemical depends on:

- your health
- your genetics
- your previous exposure to chemicals (including medicine)
- your personal habits, such as smoking and drinking.

Does exposure to fuel oil cause cancer?

Some, but not all fuel oils are believed to cause cancer. Research shows that exposure to fuel oils during refining is a probable cause of cancer.

How do I reduce my exposure to fuel oil?

- Store fuel oils in air tight containers to prevent evaporation into the air.
- Prevent spills when using or transporting fuel oils.
- If you believe your drinking water well has been polluted with fuel oil, stop using the water. Then get your water tested.

References:

Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR). ToxFAQs for Fuel Oils

This fact sheet summarizes information about this chemical and is not a complete listing of all possible effects. It does not refer to work exposure or emergency situations.

Who should I contact if I want more information?

- Poison Control Center: 800-222-1222
- Your local public health agency
- Iowa Department of Public Health
- Iowa Department of Natural Resources



www.idnr.gov/



www.idph.state.ia.us/

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