



## Product Stewardship Summary

### Cresylic Acid

#### Introduction:

Cresylic acid is a generic term referring to combinations of both cresols and xylenols along with phenol or various other alkylphenols (ethylphenols, propylphenols, etc.). Phenolic compounds in this family are found in a wide variety of ordinary materials. Small amounts are present in various foods, flower extracts, essential oils, wine, tea, roasted coffee, wood and tobacco smoke. They are also produced in low concentrations as metabolites by living organisms including humans.

Cresylic acids have long been important chemical building blocks. Commercial sourcing of cresylic acid began with coal tar distillation and, later, extraction from petroleum refinery caustics. Today, Merisol cresylic acids are primarily extracted and purified from coal gasification process streams.



their manufacture.

Merisol cresylic acids are used predominantly by other chemical manufacturers and industrial users. They are key raw materials in a variety of manufacturing processes due to their unique reactivity and solvency properties. Although cresylic acids are hazardous materials, they are safely used in processes and products that benefit consumers. It is often the case that cresylic acid is consumed entirely during use or reacted to become nonhazardous substances. The typical American uses countless products which involve cresylic acid somewhere in

#### Chemical Identity:

Cresylic acids are commonly mixtures of methylphenol [ $\text{CH}_3\text{C}_6\text{H}_4\text{OH}$ ], dimethylphenol [ $(\text{CH}_3)_2\text{C}_6\text{H}_3\text{OH}$ ], ethylphenol [ $\text{C}_2\text{H}_5\text{C}_6\text{H}_4\text{OH}$ ], and may include phenol. The CAS # for cresylic acid is 1319-77-3. Primary individual isomers are:

- phenol (hydroxybenzene, CAS # 108-95-2)
- ortho-cresol (2-methylphenol, CAS # 95-48-7)
- meta-cresol (3-methylphenol, CAS # 108-39-4)
- para-cresol (4-methylphenol, CAS # 106-44-5).
- 2,3-xylene (2,3-dimethylphenol, CAS # 526-75-0)
- 2,4-xylene (2,4-dimethylphenol, CAS # 105-67-9)
- 2,5-xylene (2,5-dimethylphenol, CAS # 95-87-4)
- 2,6-xylene (2,6-dimethylphenol, CAS # 576-26-1)
- 3,4-xylene (3,4-dimethylphenol, CAS # 95-65-8)
- 3,5-xylene (3,5-dimethylphenol, CAS # 108-68-9)
- ortho-ethylphenol (2-ethylphenol, CAS # 90-00-6 )
- meta-ethylphenol (3-ethylphenol, CAS # 620-17-7)
- para-ethylphenol (4-ethylphenol, CAS # 123-07-9)

Merisol sells a variety of products known as cresylic acid which are designated by different product codes to distinguish their composition and specifications.

Issue Date: June 30, 2009

## Uses:

Common uses for cresylic acids are:

- Manufacture of resins and plastics for circuit boards, can coatings, laminates and construction materials.
- Reactive solvent in applying insulation to magnet wire for transformers and electrical motors of all sizes found in cars, home appliances, power tools.
- Solvents, mining and oilfield chemicals, disinfectants.



## Description and Properties:

Cresylic acids are typically liquids, although they may crystallize, depending on the isomer composition and the temperature. They range from colorless to yellow, amber, red or brown.

Cresylic acids are weak organic acids which are partly miscible in water. They have a low vapor pressure but exhibit an antiseptic odor which is noticeable at concentrations below regulatory exposure limits. They possess antibacterial activity. Cresylic acids are not flammable but will burn. They are stable under recommended storage conditions.



## Health Information:

The primary dangers posed in handling cresylic acids are those resulting from physical exposure. Cresylic acids are corrosive and contact with exposed skin or mucous membranes causes severe burns. Cresylic acids also exhibit anesthetic properties. Therefore, victims may misjudge the extent of their exposure when the initial burning sensation subsides. This can result in prolonged contact, causing toxic effects in addition to the corrosive damage.

Cresylic acids are readily absorbed through the skin and mucous membranes in liquid or vapor form and act as systemic toxins. Relatively small areas of exposure (e.g. an arm or a hand) can allow sufficient absorption to cause severe poisoning. Progressive symptoms of such poisoning include headache, dizziness, ringing in the ears, nausea, vomiting, muscular twitching, mental confusion, loss of consciousness and possible death from lethal paralysis of the central nervous system. Chronic exposure can lead to loss of appetite, vomiting, nervous disorders, headaches, dizziness, fainting and dermatitis. Cresylic acids are not listed as carcinogens by OSHA.

Issue Date: June 30, 2009

## Exposure Potential:

Because they are toxic and corrosive, cresylic acids are regulated as hazardous materials. They are used primarily by other chemical manufacturers; therefore chemical and transportation workers have the highest risk of exposure. Merisol does not sell cresylic acids for direct consumer use. However, downstream products containing them which consumers may encounter include carburetor cleaners, degreasers, paint strippers and disinfectants. Consumers should always consult product labels for hazard and safe handling information.

## Environmental Information:

Cresylic acids are toxic towards both fish and aquatic invertebrates and care must be taken to prevent them from entering surface or ground waters. Cresylic acids tend to sink in fresh water but will float in concentrated brine. They are biodegradable in aerobic conditions. Soil or other materials contaminated with cresylic acids may become hazardous and must be disposed of by trained personnel according to regulations. In case of fire, cresylic acid vapors may form and be carried with smoke downwind, creating the possibility of exposure. Cresylic acids have a low potential for bioaccumulation.



## Risk Management:

Cresylic acids can be stored, transferred, processed and disposed of safely when proper procedures and safeguards are employed in industrial use. Cresylic acid production is carried out in equipment designed to prevent exposure to workers and release to the environment. Tanks, piping, pumps, and other processing equipment are specified for handling of cresylic acids. Secondary containment around tanks, process air combustion, scrubbers and other means are used to further protect from release to the environment.

Access to the production facility is restricted to employees and approved contractors and visitors.

Personal protective equipment such as chemical resistant suits, gloves and boots, goggles or face shields must be worn when handling or transferring cresylic acids as dictated by the extent of potential exposure. Steel drums, tank trucks, railcars and other transport vessels are inspected prior to and after loading to ensure that no product is released. Carriers are approved and their performance reviewed as part of our Responsible Care Management System. Merisol has a 24 hour contact number and also utilizes Chemtrec to provide emergency response information to transportation workers and first responders in the case of an accident en route.



Merisol provides material safety data sheets for each product and practical safe handling information to our customers and carriers so that they are able to use and transport our products safely. These documents include chemical and physical properties, recommended storage conditions and personal protective equipment, fire fighting and first aid information, accidental release measures, exposure guidelines and other regulatory information. Please refer to these documents for additional details.



## Regulatory Information:

Cresylic acids are classified as hazardous under OSHA and DOT. They are regulated under a variety of local, state, federal and international laws requiring exposure and environmental controls, as well as various means of hazard communication such as labeling and material safety data sheets.

## Product Stewardship:

Merisol is firmly committed to the safe manufacture, handling and distribution of our products. We incorporate product stewardship into our operating and business decisions. We actively communicate our product stewardship expectations to new and existing customers and distributors. Our Responsible Care Management System requires evaluation of potential customers with regard to the suitability of the proposed use and the safe handling systems in place prior to establishing a supply relationship. We conduct audits of customers, warehouses, and carriers as appropriate. We perform an annual product risk review, including all customers and shipping locations, to identify actions we can take to further minimize risk with regard to distribution and use of cresylic acid. Progress is tracked in implementing the identified actions. Results of this review are communicated throughout the organization so that employees are aware of the specific ways in which we meet our commitment to product stewardship and how they can support the effort.

We provide material safety data sheets and safe handling information to customers and on our web site. We welcome questions and open communication with customers regarding practical handling and safety practices for our products. Our SHES (safety/health/environmental & security), operations, maintenance and technical service personnel are ready resources for customers and others involved in using or transporting our products.

## Conclusion:

Cresylic acids are an important chemical feedstock for products that consumers use every day at home, in travel, and in the workplace. They have a long history of helping make our lives more comfortable, safe, productive and healthy. Although cresylic acids themselves are hazardous materials, they are regulated for public safety and measures are in place for their safe manufacture, storage, distribution and use.



## References:

Ullmann's Encyclopedia of Industrial Chemistry,  
Release 2003, 6<sup>th</sup> edition

Safe Handling of Cresols, Xylenols & Cresylic  
Acids, Merisol USA, 2008

ASTM Method D 3852-99 – Standard Practice  
for Sampling and Handling Phenol, Cresols and  
Cresylic Acid

Merisol Material Safety Data Sheet

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*This product stewardship summary is intended to give general information about the chemical or categories of chemicals addressed. It is not intended to provide an in-depth discussion of health and safety information. Additional information is available through the chemical's applicable Material Safety Data Sheet which should be consulted before use of the chemical. The product stewardship summary does not supplant or replace required regulatory and/or legal communication documents.*

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Issue Date: June 30, 2009

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