

## Global Product Strategy (GPS) Safety Summary

### Methyl-tert-Butyl Ether (MTBE)

This GPS Safety Summary is a high-level summary intended to provide the general public with an overview of product safety information on this chemical substance. It is not intended to provide emergency response, medical or treatment information, nor to provide an overview of all safety and health information. This summary is not intended to replace the Safety Data Sheet. For detailed guidance on the use or regulatory status of this substance, please consult the Safety Data Sheet and the Product Stewardship Bulletin (PSB).

#### Chemical Identity

**Name:** Methyl-tert-Butyl Ether (MTBE)  
**Brand names:** Methyl-tert-Butyl Ether (MTBE)  
**Chemical name (IUPAC):** 2-Methoxy-2-methylpropane  
**CAS number:** 1634-04-4  
**EC number:** 216-653-1  
**Molecular formula:** C<sub>5</sub>H<sub>12</sub>O

#### Uses and Applications

MTBE has many properties which make it a good gasoline blending component for cleaner burning fuels.

Because of the oxygen in the molecule, when used as part of the gasoline formulation, MTBE leads to a reduction in emissions of exhaust pollutants such as VOCs (Volatile Organic Compounds) and PM (particulates). Reducing these pollutants improves air quality. As an octane enhancer, MTBE is an effective replacement for aromatics in gasoline.

In contrast to other ethers, MTBE does not readily form explosive peroxides. Therefore it can be used in continuous processes as a solvent or extraction agent.

#### Physical / Chemical Properties

MTBE is a colorless liquid with a characteristic terpene-like odor. The liquid is lighter than water, but relatively soluble in water (42 g/l), while vapours are heavier than air. Based on the boiling point of 55°C (131°F) and the flash point of -28°C (-18°F), MTBE is classified as a highly flammable liquid under the Globally Harmonized System on classification and labeling (GHS).

Flash point (°C or K) is the lowest temperature, corrected to a standard pressure of 101.3 kPa, at which a liquid evolves vapours, under the conditions defined in the test method, in such an amount that a flammable vapour/air mixture is produced. This data is used to allocate a substance into the appropriate flammability class.

Additionally based on the viscosity of this product it is classified as an aspiration hazard.

## Health Effects

The human health toxicological hazards of MTBE indicate low acute toxicity by the oral, dermal and inhalation routes of exposure. Transient signs of altered nervous system function (commonly observed with short-chain ether exposure) are observed with exposure to high levels, for which it has been classified under GHS. Slight eye and mild to moderate skin irritation have been observed from contact to liquid. There is no evidence of respiratory irritation with exposure or allergic skin or respiratory reactions. The substance is readily absorbed by oral exposure or respiration but absorption through the skin is expected to be low. MTBE has been classified under GHS as hazardous for its skin irritancy.

The table below gives an overview of the health effects assessment results for MTBE.

| <b>Effect Assessment</b>                                       | <b>Result</b>  |
|--|--|
| Acute Toxicity<br>Oral / inhalation / dermal                   | Low acute toxicity but narcotic effects possible at very high concentrations                               |
| Irritation / corrosion<br>Skin / eye/ respiratory tract        | Slight eye and mild to moderate skin irritation  |
| Sensitization  | Not considered to be sensitizing   |
| Toxicity after repeated exposure<br>Oral / inhalation / dermal | Effects on liver and kidney at exposures of $\geq 3000$ ppm (inhalation) or $>209$ mg/kg bodyweight (oral) |
| Genotoxicity / Mutagenicity                                    | Not mutagenic / genotoxic  |
| Carcinogenicity  | Not considered to be a human cancer concern  |
| Toxicity for reproduction                                      | No adverse effects on fertility and not selectively toxic to the fetus.                                    |

## Environmental Effects

MTBE is inherently biodegradable under certain conditions in aquatic aerobic environments. MTBE was found to present a low ecotoxicity hazard based on the results of acute and chronic studies.

The table below gives an overview of the environmental assessment results for MTBE.

| <b>Effect Assessment</b> | <b>Result</b>                   |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Aquatic Toxicity         | Low toxicity to water organisms |

  

| <b>Fate and behavior</b>  | <b>Result</b>  |
|---------------------------|--|
| Biodegradation            | Inherently biodegradable under certain conditions in aerobic environment |
| Bioaccumulation potential | Not bio-accumulative   |
| PBT / vPvB conclusion     | Not considered to be either PBT or vPvB.                                 |

PBT = Persistent, Bio-accumulative and Toxic in the environment.

vPvB = very Persistent and very Bio-accumulative in the environment.

## **Exposure**

### Human health

**Consumer:** Exposure to consumers can occur resulting from the use of fuels containing MTBE. However, consumers are not expected to come into contact with harmful levels of MTBE, as the substance is only used at low concentrations in fuels.

**Worker:** Exposure can occur in a MTBE manufacturing or formulation facility, during storage, transport and delivery of MTBE and petrol, and in the use of fuels containing MTBE.

The use as a process solvent takes place in closed systems with limited exposure only.

### Environment

Exposure to the environment may take place during manufacturing, transport, formulation, and storage, and during professional and consumer use operations.

Based on an examination of the fate and distribution characteristics, indirect exposure via air, food, or water will not pose a risk to humans.

## **Risk Management Measures**

### Industry use, production and formulation

For detailed guidance on the use of MTBE, the Safety Data Sheet should be consulted.

MTBE should only be handled by knowledgeable and trained personnel.

When using chemicals make sure that there is adequate ventilation. Always use appropriate chemical-resistant gloves to protect hands and skin, always wear eye protection such as chemical goggles and always wear flame-retardant clothing. Do not eat, drink, or smoke where chemicals are handled, processed, or stored. Wash hands and skin following contact. If the substance gets into the eyes, rinse eyes thoroughly for at least 15 minutes with tap water and seek medical attention.

In the case of transfer or maintenance operations, always clear transfer lines prior to decoupling, and flush/drain to a closed system for recycle prior to opening equipment.

In cases where engineering controls cannot maintain airborne substance concentrations below exposure limits, or in cases with a risk of accidental exposure, additional risk management measures may be necessary, such as the use of a complete suit protecting against chemicals and supplied air, a self-contained breathing apparatus or respirator.

### Consumer use

Exposure to consumers can occur resulting from the use of fuels containing MTBE. However, consumers are not expected to come into contact with harmful levels of MTBE as the substance is only used at low concentrations in fuels.

When fuelling a car or other vehicle, the safety and handling instructions at the fuelling station should be understood and followed.

#### Environmental

In case of accidental release or spill, clear the spill immediately and do not allow the product to enter sewers, surface water or ground water.

#### Regulatory Information / Classification and Labeling

This substance has been registered under REACH by relevant companies of LyondellBasell in the European Union.

For a detailed overview of the regulatory status of this substance, please refer to the Product Stewardship Bulletin (PSB) available from the LyondellBasell corporate website.

Under the Globally Harmonized System on classification and labeling (GHS) substances are classified according to their physical, health and environmental hazards. The hazards are communicated via specific labels on the product packaging and the Safety Data Sheet. GHS attempts to standardize hazard communication so that the intended audience (workers, consumers, transport workers, and emergency responders) can better understand the hazards of the chemicals in use.

For a detailed overview of the classification and labeling of this substance, please refer to the regional Safety Data Sheet, which can be found on the LyondellBasell corporate website.

#### Conclusion Statements

- MTBE has many properties which make it a good gasoline component for cleaner burning fuels.
- MTBE is a highly flammable liquid, has low acute toxicity to human health with possible narcotic effects at high exposures, causes slight eye and mild to moderate skin irritation, and has low toxicity to water organisms.
- By observing the appropriate Risk Management Measures, the MTBE concentrations to be expected at workplaces and to the general public/consumer are below recommended exposure limits.

#### Contact Information within Company

For further information on this product in general, please consult the LyondellBasell corporate website ([www.lyb.com](http://www.lyb.com)).

#### Date of issue

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<https://www.lyondellbasell.com/en/products-technology/product-safety-stewardship/>

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