

CALCIUM CARBIDE

GENERATING GRADES

HEALTH & SAFETY INFORMATION

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EMERGENCY PHONE NUMBERS

Carbide Industries - 24 Hour Emergency Response Line

**(502) 775-4123**

Chemtrec

**800-424-9300**

## HEALTH & SAFETY INFORMATION

### GENERATING GRADE CALCIUM CARBIDE

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NOTE: This Health & Safety Information Booklet replaces previous Generating Grade Booklets.

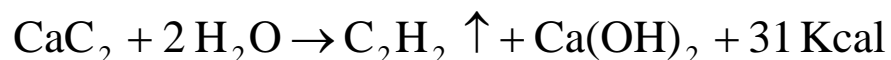
## 1. PRODUCT SUMMARY

### A. *Product Description*

Carbide Industries' generating grade calcium carbide products are granular sized materials used primarily in the manufacture of acetylene gas. The generating product line is comprised of a series of materials ranging in size from 2 inches to ¼ inch (50 mm. to 12.5 mm.).

### B. *Calcium Carbide Chemistry*

Calcium carbide is a gray to dark gray granular solid made commercially by the reaction of coke and quicklime in a submerged arc electric furnace. Calcium carbide itself is noncombustible, but reacts readily with water to form acetylene, calcium hydroxide and heat according to the following reaction:



Acetylene is a highly flammable gas with a wide explosive range and a low ignition temperature. Acetylene is also pressure sensitive and can decompose explosively in the absence of air at pressures slightly above atmospheric.

The reaction of calcium carbide and water yields calcium hydroxide, also known as carbide lime. This material is caustic and may irritate exposed skin, eyes, nose and throat. Calcium carbide is classified as a hazardous material due to the generation of acetylene gas, and as a result, strict safety precautions must be used in handling the product. Per D.O.T. classification, calcium carbide is listed as 'Dangerous when Wet' and carries the UN1402 designation.

Typical Commercial Calcium Carbide Composition

	Weight %
CaC <sub>2</sub> .....	78.0
CaO .....	15.0
CaS .....	1.2
Ca <sub>3</sub> P <sub>2</sub> .....	0.05
C (Free) .....	1.0
Si as SiO <sub>2</sub> .....	1.5
Al & Fe as R <sub>2</sub> O <sub>3</sub> .....	1.5

2. CONTAINER HANDLING AND STORAGE

Carbide Industries generating grade calcium carbide products are normally shipped in metal 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> ton Flo-bins, although other containers, including cans, drums, tankers and railcars can be used. All containers are air and water-tight, and meet D.O.T. requirements under 49 CFR 172.101 and DOT SP-14659, as well as all relevant Transport Canada regulations. The Flo-bin containers are equipped with top and bottom openings, sealed to prevent moisture entry. Purge pipes are also installed on most Flo-bin containers to facilitate purging with an inert gas prior to, during and after use.

A. *Receiving Inspection*

- Top covers should be tightly closed with shipping seals intact
  
- The body of the container should be free of open seams and evidence of in-transit damage that might affect water tightness.

- Bottom container discharges having butterfly valves should be closed and secured with shipping seals or bolts.
- All purge pipes should be tightly closed with caps or plugs.

Containers failing to meet these standards should be set to one side for special handling. Contact Carbide Industries for further information.

#### B. *Unloading Calcium Carbide Containers*

The bulk containers are typically unloaded from truck or railcar using a forklift or overhead crane. It is strongly recommended that the motors of forklifts and cranes be of the explosion proof type in accordance with National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) guidelines for hazardous locations. It is essential that mobile equipment inspection is completed on the forklift to guarantee safe usage. Any leaks, oil spills, mechanical or hydraulic malfunctions should be reported. Operators should be aware that any source of ignition can be dangerous around calcium carbide. Before unloading the trailer or railcar, be sure that the brakes are set and chocks are placed against the wheels to prevent movement. If an overhead crane is used for unloading, appropriate spreader bars should be used to lift the containers to prevent deforming the top and sides of the container.

When a forklift is used, the operator should proceed as follows:

1. Space the forks so that they will fit into the container fork channels.
2. Slowly approach the container. Raise or lower the forks, making sure they are parallel with the fork channels.
3. Drive forward slowly until the container rests against the carriage backrest.
4. Lift the container slightly to make sure it is properly balanced.

5. Tilt the mast toward the truck and slowly back up until the container is clear.
6. Lower the lift so that the container is not more than 6" above ground but high enough to clear any obstacles.
7. When moving containers to the storage area, observe road conditions. Avoid holes or ruts that might cause the container to fall. Remember: the smallest holes or opening made anywhere in a container can cause air slaking and generation of acetylene.
8. Place the containers in the storage area, make sure to deposit in such a manner that ample space between each container is allowed for periodic inspection.

### C. *Storage*

Calcium carbide may be stored indoors or outdoors. It is important, however, that certain safety precautions be followed for each.

#### *Outdoor Storage*

Calcium carbide in bulk containers or drums that have been palletized and covered with plastic or a tarp may be stored outdoors.

Storage areas should be located at least 20 feet from any line of adjoining property. The area should be posted with the notice:

**"CALCIUM CARBIDE - DANGEROUS WHEN WET -  
KEEP WATER AND OPEN FLAMES AWAY - NO SMOKING IN AREA"**

Either full or empty metal containers that are in good condition (i.e., water and air-tight) may be stored outdoors. Containers that have been previously opened or have any breaks in seams should be removed from the storage area and placed in an isolated area away from the other



stored carbide.

The containers stored outdoors should be placed on a concrete pad or on wooden timbers or pallets on firm, well drained ground. During periods of hard rain or flash flood, keep containers above water to minimize corrosion of the support base and the reaction of residual carbide on the discharge gate. If moisture is present and the discharge seal is not absolutely water tight, there is a good chance that the residual calcium carbide will draw moisture from the outside atmosphere into the container. Acetylene will then be generated within the container and a dangerous explosive atmosphere could develop. Additionally, the bottom gate can become plugged with damp calcium hydroxide. Although not required, covered outdoor storage is preferred to minimize the accumulation of snow and water on the container top and the discharge gate.

The containers should be set up in rows and arranged "first in - first out" to assure stock turnover. The contents of containers in storage the longest should be used first. Preferably, some type of divider should be used to physically separate older stock from new shipments. A large "**Use This Carbide First**" sign might be prominently displayed as a reminder. It is suggested that a regular schedule of **STOCK INSPECTION** be set up to check condition of containers. In this manner, excessive rusting or other damage to a container that might affect its water and air seal will be recognized and the defective container removed within a reasonable period of time.

### *Indoor Storage*

Indoor storage of calcium carbide should be in dry, waterproof, well ventilated locations. The storage location should be away from congested mercantile and manufacturing areas. Exposed water, steam, or condensation lines should not be permitted in rooms or buildings devoted exclusively to calcium carbide. Unopened bulk containers that have

accumulations of ice and snow are permitted to be stored in such rooms or buildings provided there is adequate drainage. The carbide storage areas should not be used for the storage of flammable materials or flammable compressed gases. The storage area should be posted with the notice:

**"CALCIUM CARBIDE - DANGEROUS WHEN WET -  
KEEP WATER AND OPEN FLAMES AWAY - NO SMOKING IN AREA"**

See NFPA 51, "Standard for the Design and Installation of Oxygen-Fuel Gas Systems for Welding, Cutting, and Allied Processes" and NFPA 51a, "Standard for Acetylene Cylinder Charging Plants" for further information. All applicable federal, state, and local regulations or ordinances governing storage of calcium carbide must be observed. Reference should also be made to the provision of insurance coverage. Contact local Fire Marshall and your insurance carrier.

### 3. FIRE & EXPLOSION HAZARDS

Calcium carbide in a dry state is non-combustible. Dusts of calcium carbide are classified as nuisance dusts and do not constitute a fire or explosion hazard except in the presence of moisture or at temperatures in excess of 1,000°C. Calcium carbide will react with ANY form of moisture (e.g. rain, dew, perspiration, condensation, atmospheric humidity etc.) to generate highly flammable acetylene gas. As a consequence, every precaution should be taken to ensure that materials containing calcium carbide do not come into contact with any form of water and that water sources, open flames, and smoking are prohibited in areas where calcium carbide is used or stored.

#### A. *Analysis of Gaseous Atmospheres for Acetylene*

By convention, low concentrations of combustible gases are measured in terms of their Lower Explosive Limit (or LEL). For acetylene in air mixtures, the LEL is 2.5% acetylene gas (on a volume basis). At this concentration the acetylene level would be reported as 100% LEL. Similarly, absolute acetylene gas concentrations of 0.5%, 1%, and 2% (by volume) are reported as 20% LEL, 40% LEL, and 80% LEL respectively. It is important to remember that when measuring combustible gas concentrations, the analysis usually reports the concentrations as a percentage of the lower explosive limit, meaning that any concentration below 100% LEL is non-explosive.

The testing of gaseous atmospheres for acetylene is suggested whenever there is the potential for explosive mixtures of acetylene to collect in equipment. In closed conveying systems, it is also advisable to monitor the oxygen content. This is due to the importance of assuring that the oxygen content stays below the minimum concentration required for acetylene ignition – typically 6% at atmospheric pressures.

For measuring acetylene levels in oxygen deprived atmospheres, such as in nitrogen-purged containers and storage bins or enclosed conveying equipment, Carbide Industries recommends using an infrared monitor, as these instruments do not require oxygen for accurate readings. For area monitoring or measurements where at least 20% oxygen is present, electrochemical based units may be used. Additionally, It is important that any gas atmosphere being sampled is at atmospheric pressure for the measurement to be correct.

For further information, please contact Carbide Industries LLC.

## B. *Handling Spills and Leaks*

If the spill is dry and free from contaminants, sweep up the material immediately. Transfer to a dry, open top metal container in a covered,

ventilated area, and consume in the process as soon as possible. The material should be clearly labeled as **calcium carbide - water reactive solid - acetylene hazard**. Personnel should not use compressed air to blow down or maneuver spills as this generates airborne dust. Spills of calcium carbide should be swept or shoveled during clean-up. The use of vacuum systems to address spills is discouraged, as there is the potential for developing an explosive atmosphere in such equipment.

If the spilled material is damp or contaminated, the area should be cordoned off to prevent unauthorized access. Contact with water should be minimized. The material should not be disturbed until the residual lime is free of calcium carbide. It is important that the area of the spill be isolated and that unauthorized personnel are kept out. The clean-up team should have proper protective clothing including goggles, full face shields, and dust masks. The operation should be performed under close supervision with water-less fire extinguishing equipment maintained near-by.

Spills to the environment of ten pounds or greater require notification of the National Response Center (1-800-424-8802) as well as appropriate state and local authorities. The following information should be provided:

1. Name of reporter
2. Address of company represented by reporter
3. Phone number where reporter can be contacted
4. Date, time, and exact location of incident
5. Description of incident, quantity spilled
6. Extent of injuries, if any
7. Possible danger to public

The National Response Center will make the necessary follow-up to ensure proper handling and clean-up procedures were followed.

In the event of a large spill, Carbide Industries LLC should be contacted

immediately. CARBIDE INDUSTRIES EMERGENCY RESPONSE NUMBER 502-775-4123 is answered 24 hours a day.

IF THERE IS ANY DOUBT ABOUT HOW TO PROCEED, CARBIDE INDUSTRIES SHOULD BE CONTACTED.

C. *Fighting Calcium Carbide Fires*

If for any reason the calcium carbide spill contacts water (e.g., material spilled onto a wet floor) and the acetylene gas ignites, the first formed fire may die out, due to a protective crust of carbide lime formed at the surface which prevents the further ingress of oxygen. Disturbance of the crust may then be followed by re-ignition.

Once a fire begins, it can only continue to burn as long as acetylene is being produced. Calcium carbide fires are unusual because they can only be fought by PREVENTING WATER FROM CONTACTING THE CALCIUM CARBIDE. Provided that the fire is away from buildings and people, the easiest and safest course of action is to isolate the fire and allow it to continue to burn until acetylene is no longer produced. At this stage either the calcium carbide is fully reacted or the moisture is consumed. This will prevent the accumulation of unburned acetylene, which could lead to re-ignition and resultant explosion.

If an acetylene fire must be put out, this should only be accomplished by eliminating the source of water. The spill should be contained by encircling with sandbags or similar inert material, such that running surface water is deflected from the spill. If rain is a problem, corrugated steel sheets can be used to cover the spill. The spill should then be covered with dry inert materials such as dry sand, lime, dry chemical, or by using ABC type fire extinguishers. Apply the extinguishing media over the top of the burning material to blanket it. Once a crust has formed over the burning material, do

not disturb or walk through it. Breaking the crust will allow air to get to the carbide and may re-ignite the acetylene. Once the fire is out, the spill should be left until cold and only then cleaned up (once weather conditions permit). An ample supply of the fire protection equipment should be maintained and be conspicuously identified so that it is readily available and accessible in an emergency.

For large spills and fires, it is best to withdraw from the area and allow the fire to burn until the acetylene is no longer produced. The fire fighters should be equipped with full protective clothing and self-contained breathing apparatus. Never turn your back on the fire! Only authorized personnel, trained in fighting calcium carbide fires, should be allowed in the area. Isolate the fire area and deny entry to all others.

#### D. *Water Penetration of Containers*

If a single container becomes contaminated with water and develops hot spots, you may first notice a very distinct acetylene odor (garlic like). There may be bulging of the container, smoking or hissing from the gas escaping. Try to remove the container from the source of moisture if you can do so without risk. If it is raining, a plastic cover or tarpaulin should be placed loosely over the top of the container; to repel rain water but still allow accumulated acetylene to escape. Allow the container to remain in a dry isolated area but do not put indoors. Do not attempt to open the top hatch or jar the container in any way as this could cause the acetylene to decompose spontaneously and explode. Once the container has cooled and there is no further indication of acetylene generation, the container should be purged with nitrogen or other inert gas. In case there is a spillage in the carbide storage area and fire results, *DO NOT ATTEMPT TO USE WATER OR FOAM TO EXTINGUISH THE FIRE*. These will only cause more acetylene to be generated.

## 4. HEALTH & HYGIENE

### A. Health Hazards

Calcium carbide is neither toxic nor carcinogenic (it does not cause cancer). There are no long-term effects of exposure to calcium carbide, and there are no existing TLV (threshold limit values) for exposure to calcium carbide or calcium hydroxide. Although practically inert, fine particles of these materials are classified as nuisance dusts, and must be treated as such. The primary effects of bodily contact with calcium carbide are related to the heat of reaction and the calcium hydroxide produced. The heat of reaction is not enough to cause harm in most cases, but the residual material (hydrate) has the irritating effects of a strong alkali.

#### *Inhalation*

Dusts are irritating to nose, throat and lungs. Acute overexposure can result in coughing and sneezing.

#### *Eye Contact*

Dusts are irritating to eyes. Acute overexposure can cause conjunctivitis and corneal abrasions.

#### *Skin Contact*

Superficial lime burns can result if moisture is present.

#### *Ingestion*

Superficial burns to mouth and esophagus

### *Chronic*

No systemic effects are known. Prolonged and repeated exposure may cause dry, cracked skin; eyes may show irritation around lids.

### B. *Personal Hygiene*

Standard safety glasses with side shields or goggles may be worn for handling calcium carbide. In addition, eye wash fountains should be available for emergency use in areas where calcium carbide dust might enter the eye.

Employees should be advised to wear long sleeve shirts to protect the arms and wrists. They should change work clothes often enough to avoid wearing clothing heavily contaminated with calcium carbide dust. Work clothes should be loosely buttoned at waist or neck, and in hot weather, the use of a scarf around the neck helps to avoid chafing between the collar (which may be contaminated with calcium carbide) and moist skin.

Standard cotton work gloves may be worn to protect the hands. Calcium carbide should not be allowed to get inside work gloves. Stockinette may be wrapped around hands and wrists to prevent burns in these areas. In hot weather or after unusually heavy dust contact, the employees should be encouraged to wash face, neck, hands, and forearms to remove accumulations of carbide.

### C. *First Aid*

The effects of calcium carbide are limited to local action at the site of contact with a moist surface. Therefore, first aid treatment is directed toward removal of the irritant residual lime.



### *Inhalation*

Remove to fresh air, get prompt medical attention. If heavy dusting is a problem, the use of a nuisance dust respirator may be necessary. Any disposable respirator meeting the NIOSH N-95 standard is recommended.

### *Eye Contact*

Flush eyes immediately with clear water, being sure to wash out all the calcium carbide particles. Continue flushing for at least 15 minutes. For more effective cleaning, a saline solution is recommended to clean around the eyes. Refer case to a physician when the person has come in contact with large amounts of carbide or the irritation persists.

### *Skin Contact*

All of the calcium carbide should be dusted or wiped off the skin before first aid is attempted. Wash the skin with vinegar to neutralize any adhering lime, and then flush with copious amounts of water. Wash clothes thoroughly to remove any residual carbide before wearing again. If skin irritation results from the calcium carbide contact, cover with sterile dressing. A topical antibiotic ointment may be used if deemed necessary. No other drug should be used without medical authorization.

### *Ingestion*

Dilute by drinking water or milk. Do not induce vomiting. Get prompt medical attention.

**This information should be used as general guidelines until Carbide Industries LLC is contacted. Since each emergency is different, this information should not be used as a substitute for calling Carbide Industries LLC for expert technical information and assistance.**

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