



PUBLIC FACT SHEET

WHITE PHOSPHORUS

What is white phosphorus?

White phosphorus can be a colorless, white, or yellow waxy solid with a garlic-like odor. It does not occur naturally, but it is manufactured from phosphate rocks. White phosphorus reacts with oxygen, and easily catches fire.

What are possible methods of exposure?

- breathing contaminated air near a facility that is using white phosphorus
- eating contaminated fish or game birds from sites containing white phosphorus
- drinking or swimming in water that has been contaminated with white phosphorus
- touching soil contaminated with white phosphorus

What are possible symptoms of white phosphorus exposure?

- burns and irritation
- liver damage
- kidney damage
- heart damage
- lung damage
- bone damage
- death

How is white phosphorus detected?

White phosphorus is a colorless, white, or yellow waxy solid with a garlic-like odor.

What is the treatment for exposure to white phosphorus?

If you have been exposed to white phosphorus, contact the emergency medical authorities immediately.

No antidote exists for white phosphorus exposure. Treatment consists of removing the white phosphorus from the body as soon as possible and providing supportive medical care in a hospital setting.

For more information on white phosphorus contact:

Ottawa County Health Department
www.miOttawa.org

Center for Disease Control and Prevention
www.bt.cdc.gov/agent/phosphorus/
Phone: (888) 246-2675