

## PART 1

### HAZARD DOCUMENTATION AND CONTROL RECOMMENDATIONS

The current U.S. standard for nickel carbonyl vapor is 1 part per billion (ppb). Finland, Japan, Poland, and Sweden have also adopted a 1 ppb standard. The USSR and Rumania have lower standards of .07 and .70 ppb, respectively, while the Federal Republic of Germany and Yugoslavia both have a 100 ppb standard.

The 1 ppb U.S. standard was adopted in 1968 from the Threshold Limit Values (TLV) as established by the American Conference of Governmental Industrial Hygienists (ACGIH). It is based on early epidemiologic studies which indicated a high incidence of lung and nasal cancers in Welsh refinery workers using the nickel carbonyl process. In 1975 the ACGIH made a proposal to raise their TLV to 50 ppb after an evaluation of the existing data suggested that substances other than nickel carbonyl may have been the etiologic agents involved in the Welsh refineries. These etiologic agents are discussed in the "NIOSH Criteria for a Recommended Standard ... Occupational Exposure to Inorganic Nickel." Because of the controversy surrounding the issue of nickel carbonyl carcinogenicity and because nickel carbonyl is sufficiently dissimilar from the compounds covered in the Nickel Criteria Document, it was decided to evaluate the two occupational hazards separately. The divergence of established national standards indicates that the carcinogenic potential of nickel carbonyl and the degree to which this substance can be monitored and controlled may be debatable at the international level.

The following is a review of the known hazards of nickel carbonyl. The toxic nature and the possibility of exposure to nickel carbonyl vapor

in certain occupational environments serve as the basis for including control recommendations. The information and recommendations will aid the U.S. Department of Labor, industrial hygienist, physician, and employer, in protecting the worker from the hazards of nickel carbonyl, and will aid the worker in recognizing the hazard so that it can be avoided and/or protected against.

## I. PROPERTIES

### A. Identification

1. synonyms: nickel tetracarbonyl
2. CAS number: 13463-39-3
3. formula:  $\text{Ni}(\text{CO})_4$
4. molecular weight: 170.75

### B. Physical/Chemical

1. appearance and odor: pale yellow, volatile liquid with weak, soot-like odor detectable between 500-3000 ppb
2. boiling point: 43.2 C (at 760 mm Hg)
3. melting point: -25 C
4. specific gravity: 1.32
5. vapor density: 5.9 (air=1)
6. vapor pressure at 20 C: 315 mm Hg
7. solubility: slightly soluble in water; miscible with ethanol, benzene, chloroform, acetone, and carbon tetrachloride
8. reactivity: reacts slowly with non-oxidizing acids such as hydrochloric acid and sulfuric acid and vigorously with nitric acid and the halogens to form the corresponding bivalent nickel salts; reacts with oxygen forming nickel oxide in dry air and nickel carbonates with prolonged exposure to moist air; in the presence of water, nickel carbonyl reacts with nitric oxide to form nickel nitrosylhydroxide [1]. Decay of nickel carbonyl in air has been studied in the ppb range and has been found to proceed at a simple exponential rate with a half life of about 30 minutes [2].

## II. COMMON OPERATIONS, USES, AND OCCURRENCE

Nickel carbonyl is used in several industrial processes; in the metallurgy of pure nickel (Mond Process), in nickel-vapor-plating, and in the synthesis of methyl and ethyl acrylate monomers [3]. Nickel carbonyl

was at one time used as a catalyst in the petroleum industry. Due to its toxicity, however, its use in this industry has greatly decreased in recent years [4], (See Appendix A for process descriptions). Inadvertent formation of nickel carbonyl is also possible [3]. Conditions favorable for its formation occur if carbon monoxide under high partial pressure contacts an active form of nickel (ie, finely divided nickel) in a temperature range of 50-150 C (written communication, George Buehler, 1976).

NIOSH estimates that no more than 500 workers are subject to nickel carbonyl exposure through current U.S. industrial operations involving the manufacture, use, or handling of this substance. However, this number becomes an order of magnitude larger when considering occupational activities which may lead to the inadvertant formation of nickel carbonyl such as the use of nickel catalysts in hydrogenation, in coal gasification, and in petroleum refining.

### III. BIOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF EXPOSURE

#### A. Toxic Effects in Animals

Toxic effects have been observed in animals when exposed to nickel carbonyl by inhalation. Effects noted most often were edema of the lungs and brain.

In 1908, Armit [5] detailed the reaction of and tissue changes in rabbits, cats, and dogs after exposing them to atmospheres containing varying percentages of nickel carbonyl ranging from 0.013-0.075 volume % (130-750 ppb)\* for 31-82 minutes.

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\* For comparison with the U.S. standard, all quantities of nickel carbonyl in the text have been converted to ppb and placed in parentheses beside the original value.

Macroscopically observed changes included congestion of all organs, but especially of the lungs, and to a lesser extent of the brain. When death occurred within 24 hours of exposure, the lungs were hyperemic, and contained both punctate and large hemorrhages. When death occurred during the second day, the hyperemia was intense and the lungs contained blood-stained fluid in addition to numerous hemorrhages pervading the entire organ. When death occurred during the third day, extensive sanguinous consolidation and scattered emphysema were noted. Death on the fourth and fifth days showed patchy hemorrhages, and consolidation over the rest of the lungs. Microscopic examination of the lungs revealed that early lesions were in the endothelial lining of the blood vessels and in the interalveolar tissues. The lesions progressed to involve both the alveolar walls and spaces. When the blood vessels lost fluid and the walls ruptured, edema and consolidation followed. Finally, typical broncho-pneumonia developed. The brains of the animals were hemorrhagic and edematous.

In 1951, Barnes and Denz [6] exposed rats to nickel carbonyl at concentrations ranging from 17-70 milligrams per cubic meter of air (mg/cu m)(2400-10,000 ppb) for 5-30 minutes and rabbits at concentrations ranging from 10-32 mg/cu m (1400-4600 ppb) for 10-30 minutes. The animals were killed at intervals up to several months after exposure. Mortality and the effects seen upon gross and microscopic examination were very similar to those described by Armit [5]. In addition, they described the presence of an early compensatory fibrogenic lung reaction in those animals which were killed between one and four months after exposure and a complete resolution of that reaction in animals which were killed a year or more after exposure. Also, they found that only 5 to 10% of the calculated amount of

nickel inhaled by the animals was retained in the lungs, suggesting rapid relocation and excretion of that which was absorbed.

Sunderman and Selin [7] investigated the metabolism of nickel carbonyl. Radioactive nickel carbonyl was administered to 78 adult male rats by either intravenous (IV) injection or inhalation. The LD50 value of 5 $\mu$ L/100g body weight, as determined by Hackett and Sunderman [8], was used. Determination of radioactive nickel in urine, feces, and expired air revealed that 38.4% of the injected dose was exhaled as nickel carbonyl, 31.2% was excreted in the urine, and 2.4% was excreted in the feces. A total of 66.2% of the injected dose was excreted within 24 hours following exposure. Further excretion of nickel carbonyl was extremely slow and reached a maximum of 72.0% of the injected dose at the end of the fourth day. Tissue analyses of rats killed 24 hours after injection revealed 7.3% of the dose in muscle and fat, 5.5% in bone and connective tissue, 4.7% in viscera and blood, and 0.2% in the brain and spinal cord. According to the authors, excretion values obtained after inhalation were not practicable in that there was significant fecal and exhalant contamination as a result of nickel carbonyl adsorbed onto the animals' fur during exposure.

#### B. Carcinogenicity in Animals

Three animal studies [9-11] have been conducted to assess the carcinogenic potential of nickel carbonyl. Two studies were conducted by inhalation and one by intravenous injection using either multiple or single exposures. Details of the experimental design and pertinent results are presented in Table I.

In the first two studies [9,10] Sunderman and his coworkers observed a single pulmonary carcinoma in each of six groups of exposed rats. A total of six lung cancers occurred in 157 nickel carbonyl-exposed rats that

survived at least 12 months. No lung cancers were observed in 82 controls. This difference is of only marginal statistical significance (P=.073). Spontaneously occurring lung cancer is extremely rare in rats and according to Sunderman and Donnelly [10] none had been observed in their 12-year series of experiments. Comparing the incidence of lung cancer in nickel carbonyl-exposed rats to this much larger, historical control population would increase the level of significance.

These six lung cancers consisted of 2 squamous cell carcinomas, 2 adenocarcinomas, and 2 anaplastic carcinomas, all found between 24-27 months after initial exposure. In addition, lung cancers occurred equally in rats subjected to either a large single exposure or repeated exposures at much lower levels for a long period of time. The major sites of metastases were the kidneys, liver, and heart [10].

A wide variety of tumors other than pulmonary cancers was observed in both nickel carbonyl-exposed and control groups in the second Sunderman study [10]. While the total incidence of tumors in the nickel carbonyl-exposed rats was greater than that in the controls, 50% vs 33%, a causal relationship was considered doubtful [10]. There were no tumors other than the lung cancers reported in the Sunderman et al. [9] study. However, the number of animals that survived to 24 months was very small and the thoroughness of the pathology examination could not be ascertained from the report.

In the studies of Lau et al. [11], nickel carbonyl was injected intravenously into the tail vein of Sprague-Dawley rats, either as a single injection or in six injections administered 2-4 weeks apart. The total dose administered to the multiple - dose group was approximately 2 1/2 times that of the single-injection group.

For the single-injected group, there was little overall difference in the survival or in the incidences of benign tumors of treated and control animals. The incidence of malignant tumors was slightly increased over the controls, 8.3% vs 4.3%. Rats administered multiple injections had a greater increase, 15% vs 4.3%, in the overall incidence of malignant tumors which was of statistical significance ( $P < 0.05$ ). Other than two pulmonary lymphomas, no malignant tumors were observed in the controls. Considering only non-lymphomatous malignant tumors, the difference between the exposed and control groups is of greater statistical significance ( $P < 0.02$ ). The tumors originated in many organs and most were observed to have metastasized.

In an additional study, not tabulated in Table I, Sanina [12] reported the induction of malignant tumors in various organs including the uterus, ovaries and mammary glands in rats exposed by inhalation for two hours, once every two weeks, at a concentration of 0.0005 - 0.0017 mg/L (70-240 ppb). Tumors were found during examination after having killed the animals at various time intervals up to six months. While the report indicated no tumors in the controls, the total number of exposed animals was small (20) and no data were given on the incidence of each type of tumor or on the time of killing. Due to its lack of details, very little information can be derived from this report.

Thus, the carcinogenicity of nickel carbonyl has been demonstrated in at least three different experiments, by two routes of exposure (inhalation and intravenous injection) and in different organ systems. Perhaps, the most pertinent finding is that of lung cancers in the inhalation studies, closely simulating the most probable route of occupational exposure to this compound. The extent of carcinogen testing has been limited to only

one species, the rat. While it is difficult to determine whether other species, and indeed man, would show a similar response to that of the rat, Laskin and Sellakumar [13] concluded that the common laboratory rat most clearly meets the requirements of the ideal animal model for respiratory carcinogenesis. Their conclusion was based upon the induction of tumors in rats which are similar in morphology and origin to those of man, and the extreme rarity with which these tumors spontaneously occur. In addition, the inhalation and retention kinetics of inhaled particulates and vapors of the rat resembles that of man moreso than do those of the smaller laboratory rodents.

While the empirical results of the animal carcinogenesis tests are considered to be only reasonably conclusive, the interactions of nickel carbonyl with DNA and RNA may support the conclusion that nickel carbonyl has a carcinogenic potential.

The mechanism whereby nickel carbonyl may produce cancer has not been established. Studies have confirmed intracellular biochemical activity possibly related to carcinogenic activity. Beach and Sunderman [14] have conducted several studies demonstrating that nickel carbonyl has an inhibitory effect upon hepatic RNA synthesis. The action appears not to be directly on the DNA-dependent RNA polymerase but to depend, rather, on possible combination with an unidentified intermediate [15]. The inhibition is not related to impaired transport of RNA precursors across the nuclear membrane.

Nickel carbonyl may also function as a co-carcinogen in the carcinogenicity of 3,4- benzpyrene, as it inhibits the induction of benzpyrene hydroxylase. This enzyme transforms 3,4-benzpyrene into its non-carcinogenic hydroxylated derivatives [16].



Table I. Summary of Experiments to Assess Carcinogenicity of Ni(CO)<sub>4</sub>

Exposure Regimen	Number Initially on Test	Survival Data		Malignant Lung Tumors	Other Malignant Tumors <sup>a</sup>
		>12mos	>24mos		
<b>I. RATS</b>					
Route: Inhalation Observation Period: 2 1/2 years Exposure Period: 30 minutes					
Male Wistar (Sunderman, <u>et al.</u> , 1959) [9]					
A. 0.03 mg/L (4300 ppb) 3x weekly - 1 year	64	16	5	1-squamous cell carcinoma	none observed
B. 0.06 mg/L (8600 ppb) 3x weekly - 1 year	32	4	1	1-squamous cell carcinoma	none observed
C. 0.25 mg/L (3600 ppb) single exposure	80	8	3	1-anaplastic carcinoma	none observed
D. Controls (vehicle) for A&B	41	14	3	none observed	none observed
<b>II. RATS</b>					
Route: Inhalation Observation Period: 3 years Exposure Period: 30 minutes					
Male Wistar (Sunderman and Donnelly, 1965), [10]					
A. 0.6 mg/L (86,000 ppb) single exposure	285 <sup>b</sup>	63 <sup>c</sup>	35 <sup>c</sup>	1-adenocarcinoma	<u>14 total.</u> lymphomas(9);myel. leukemia(1);fibrosarcoma(1), subcut; osteosarcoma(1); Leydig cell carcinoma(1); sq-carcinoma(1) of skin
B. 0.6 mg/L (86,000 ppb) single exposure & Dithiocarb, 50 mg/kg, subcutaneous, 15 minutes after Ni(CO) <sub>4</sub> exposure	60	58	27	1-anaplastic	<u>16 total.</u> lymphomas(8); fibrosarcomas(4); subcut. carcinomas(2) of skin; sarcomas(2), origin unknown
C. 0.03 mg/L (4300 ppb) 3x weekly - life	64	48	8	1-adenocarcinoma	<u>6 total.</u> lymphomas(5); sq-carcinoma(1) in salivary gland and adrenal gland
D. Controls (vehicle) for A	19	19	} 22	none observed	<u>5 total.</u> lymphomas(3); angiosarcomas(1);sq-carcinoma(1) of skin
E. Controls (vehicle + Dithiocarb for B)	19	19		none observed	<u>6 total.</u> lymphomas(4); fibrosarcoma(1)intra-abdominal;adenocarcinoma(1) of thyroid
F. Controls (vehicle) for C	32	30	22	none observed	<u>4 total.</u> lymphoma(1);myel. leukemia(1);fibrosarcoma(1) intra-abdominal; adenocarcinoma(1) of pancreas

Table I. Summary of Experiments to Assess Carcinogenicity of Ni(CO)<sub>4</sub> (cont'd)

Exposure Regimen	Number Initially on Test	Survival Data	Malignant Lung Tumors	Other Malignant Tumors
<b>III. RATS</b> Route: Intravenous Injection Observation Period: Until death Male & Female Sprague-Dawley (Lau, et al., 1972) [11]				
		Median Age at Death (Months) <sup>d</sup>		
A. 2.2 mg/100 gm b.wt. - single exposure	26 M 46 F	22 23	2-lymphomas 2-lymphomas	7 total. fibrosarcomas(3) of orbit, pinna and neck; undif. sarcoma(1) of lung; hemangioendothelioma(1) of s.c. tissue; undif. leukemia(1); carcinoma(1) of kidney
B. 0.9 mg/100 gm body wt. - 6 exposures at 2-4 week intervals	61 M 60 F	21 24	3-lymphomas 2-lymphomas	7 total. undif. sarcomas(5) of pleura, liver, pancreas, uterus and abdominal wall; carcinomas(2) of liver and breast
C. Controls (vehicle)	15 M 32 F	24 24	none observed 2-lymphomas	none observed none observed

- a. Benign tumors occurred in both Ni(CO)<sub>4</sub>-exposed and control groups at approximately the same ratio and type
- b. Only 71 survived first 3 weeks
- c. Number calculated from survival graphs and percentages provided in referenced reports
- d. No other data on survival provided

### C. Toxic Effects in Humans

In view of its volatility and its general use in the vapor state, the major occupational exposure to nickel carbonyl is by inhalation. Skin absorption [17] and ingestion [18] also may be routes of entry into the body.

The initial signs and symptoms resulting from exposure to toxic amounts of nickel carbonyl have been most often described as dyspnea, fatigue, nausea, and headache [19-21]. These signs and symptoms, except in the most severe exposures, usually ceased in the first 24 hours following exposure and the exposed persons appeared to have recovered [21,22]. Delayed signs and symptoms usually develop gradually during the 2-10 day period following nickel carbonyl exposure and may include dyspnea, coughing, muscular weakness, excessive sweating, substernal pain, elevated temperature, and death [19-24]. Kincaid et al. [25] have suggested 3 ppm (3000 ppb) for 30 minutes (approximately one tenth of the LD50 value for rats) as the exposure limit of nickel carbonyl below which no serious acute symptoms in man will occur.

Scientific reports on the human pathologic changes induced by nickel carbonyl have come from acute, work-exposure cases. Since these exposures were accidental in nature, no exposure-level measurements were obtained. Upon medical examination of 125 victims in various exposure cases and performance of autopsies on two of these victims, respiratory damage (ie, lung edema, bronchial pneumonia, interstitial pneumonitis, bronchitis, and reduced pulmonary capacity) was found to be the most frequent significant manifestation [19, 20, 22, 26-30]. In the two fatal-exposure cases, the investigators, Brandes [27] in 1934 and Jones [30] in 1973 reported finding

edema of the brain in addition to damage of the lungs in the decedents. A report was published in Lancet [23] in 1903 concerning two other deaths associated with exposure to nickel carbonyl but the description of pathologic changes found in the bodies of the victims is of questionable accuracy.

Cardiac irregularities [28], liver enlargement [28], and spleen enlargement [31] are some of the other significant human health effects of nickel carbonyl exposure reported in the literature. A case of an allergic reaction known as Loffler's Syndrome was attributed to nickel carbonyl exposure by Sunderman and Sunderman [26].

#### D. Epidemiology Studies of Cancer in Humans

In 1939, Hill [32] observed an apparent increase in lung and nasal cavity cancers occurring in Mond nickel refinery workers in South Wales. Morgan [33] and Doll et al. [34] conducted followup studies on these same workers and confirmed Hill's earlier findings.

Of 482 workers, 113 died of lung cancer and 39 of nasal cancer. Of these, all nasal cancers and all but 8 lung cancers occurred in workers employed prior to 1925. The risk of developing lung cancer for those employed prior to 1925 was 5-10 times that expected and that for nasal cancer, 100-900 times that expected [32-34]. For those employed after 1925, the observed incidences approximated the national averages, perhaps indicating the reduction or elimination of a causal factor.

Based upon the observations of Hill [32] the British government attributed nickel carbonyl as the causative agent for development of these cancers [34].

Morgan [33] and Doll et al. [34] refuted an association with exposure to nickel carbonyl and believed that metal dust, copper sulfate, and/or arsenic were the more likely causative agents. This conclusion was based upon the following considerations; (1) although no changes had been made in the nickel carbonyl process for 50 years prior to 1958, the occurrence of lung and nasal cancers was confined exclusively to those workers employed prior to 1925, (2) very few cases of acute toxicity attributable to nickel carbonyl inhalation were recorded, indicating that substantial exposure to the vapor of nickel carbonyl was unlikely, (3) between 1920 and 1925, major changes were made in the refinery that resulted in less dust, use of masks to reduce dust inhalation, and use of arsenic-free sulfuric acid, and (4) studies of the personnel in nickel refineries not using the nickel carbonyl process also indicated an increased risk to develop cancers of the lungs and nasal sinuses [35-38].

Additionally, Doll et al. [34] have speculated that differences in cigarette smoking might help to account for the difference between the incidences of cancer of the lungs in the Welsh workers hired before and after 1925.

From a review of the epidemiologic data it is not possible to confirm or deny an association of lung cancer with nickel carbonyl exposure.

#### E. Summary of Carcinogenicity Data

While the animal data are suggestive of the carcinogenic potential of nickel carbonyl, the human epidemiologic data are insufficient to support or deny a causal relationship. Animal studies suggest that cancer may not be confined solely to the respiratory tract, but involve other organ systems as well. They also indicate that the route of exposure may modify the carcinogenic response. Cancers of the respiratory system were observed following inhalation exposure whereas, tumors of other organ systems were reported subsequent to IV injection. Further, animal studies have elucidated cellular biochemical activity which may be compatible with generally accepted mechanisms for carcinogenicity.

#### IV. HAZARDS: PRECAUTIONS, PREVENTION, AND EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

##### A. Fire, Explosion, and Reactivity Data

Nickel carbonyl vapor (2% in air by volume or 20,000 ppm) can ignite spontaneously at room temperature [18]. Nickel carbonyl liquid can explode if heated rapidly to around 60 degrees C or above in the presence of air [39]. Because of its extreme flammability, the following safeguards should be taken in nickel carbonyl work areas:

1. Nickel carbonyl should be stored in tightly closed containers in a cool, well ventilated area, away from heat and such oxidizers as nitric acid and chlorine
2. Nickel carbonyl should be transported in steel bottles under a protective (carbon dioxide) atmosphere [40]
3. Such sources of ignition as lighted devices for smoking tobacco and open flames should be prohibited wherever nickel carbonyl is handled, used, or stored

4. Where a fan is located in ductwork in which nickel carbonyl is present in a concentration greater than 5,000 ppm, the fan blades and the throat should be made of a nonsparking material
5. Foam, carbon dioxide, or dry-chemical fire extinguishers should be readily accessible (A solid stream of water will scatter and spread the fire)

#### B. Spill, Leak, and Disposal Procedures

If nickel carbonyl is spilled or leaks, the following steps should be immediately taken:

1. Evacuate all but those persons necessary to clean-up activities
2. Remove all ignition sources
3. Ventilate area of spill or leak
4. For small quantities, absorb on paper towels, evaporate in a safe place (such as a fume hood), allow sufficient time for vapor to completely clear hood ductwork, and then burn the paper [39,41]
5. Large quantities should be collected and atomized in a suitable combustion chamber equipped with an appropriate effluent gas-cleaning device

Nickel carbonyl should not be allowed to enter a confined space, such as a sewer, because of its toxicity and the possibility of an explosion. Further, in the clean-up of leaks or spills and maintenance or repair operations on contaminated systems or equipment, authorized personnel should be required to wear air-supplied respirators (see Section V.C.).

#### C. Medical Surveillance

Medical surveillance should be made available to all persons subject to occupational exposure to nickel carbonyl as described below.

1. Preplacement medical examinations should include at least:
  - a. Comprehensive medical and work histories with special emphasis directed to symptoms related to the lungs and upper respiratory tract

- b. A physical examination
  - c. Pulmonary function tests
  - d. Analysis for urinary nickel content
  - e. 14" x 17" posterior-anterior chest X-ray
  - f. A judgment of workers' ability to use positive pressure respirators
2. Periodic examinations should be made available at least on an annual basis. These examinations should include at least:
    - a. Interim medical and work histories
    - b. A physical examination as described above for the preplacement examination
  3. In addition, samples of urine should be analyzed for nickel content on a monthly basis.

#### D. Sanitation Practices

Employers should institute appropriate sanitation practices which include the following:

1. Clothing which becomes wet with liquid nickel carbonyl should be removed as soon as possible and placed in vapor-tight, sealed containers for storage until it can be discarded (into decontamination furnace or decontaminated for reuse by laundering, steaming, or comparably effective treatment)
2. Persons involved with the handling and/or treatment of contaminated clothing should be informed of the hazard and should take appropriate precautions (e.g., wear respirators)
3. Personal items (e.g., watches, wallets, etc.) should not be permitted in nickel carbonyl work areas for their usefulness following any needed decontamination treatment may be diminished
4. Employees whose skin becomes wet with nickel carbonyl should immediately wash or shower to remove any nickel carbonyl from the skin (if possible, auxiliary, self-contained breathing apparatus should be left on while washing, to protect against vapor)
5. Employees who handle nickel carbonyl should wash their hands thoroughly before eating, smoking, or using toilet facilities



6. Employees should not eat or smoke in nickel carbonyl work areas

#### E. Informing Employees of Hazards

Each employee, prior to being permitted to work in a nickel carbonyl area, should receive instruction and training on:

1. The nature of the potential carcinogenic hazard and the toxicity of nickel carbonyl, including recognition of the signs and symptoms of acute exposure and the urgency of reporting these immediately to designated health personnel
2. The specific nature of the operation involving nickel carbonyl which could result in exposure
3. The purpose for and operation of respirator equipment
4. The purpose for and application of decontamination practices
5. The purpose for and significance of emergency practices and procedures, and the employees' specific role in such activities
6. The recognition and evaluation of conditions and situations which may result in the release of nickel carbonyl
7. The purpose for and nature of medical examinations

#### V. CONTROL INFORMATION

##### A. Posting of Signs

Entrances to areas where nickel carbonyl is manufactured, used, or stored should be posted with signs indicating:

DANGER!  
NICKEL CARBONYL AREA  
AUTHORIZED PERSONNEL ONLY  
CANCER SUSPECT AGENT

Emphasis in any sign should be placed on the possible danger and the restricted nature of the area. In addition, containers of nickel carbonyl should be labelled: Nickel Carbonyl, Flammable Liquid, Poison.

##### B. Protective Clothing

Absorption of nickel carbonyl through the skin has not been demonstrated but has been suggested [12]. Therefore, the necessity for the use of protective gloves and impervious [e.g., rubber] clothing is

uncertain. However, in view of nickel carbonyl's volatility and the major threat of exposure to its vapor, the use of protective clothing is not suggested. Appropriate sanitation practices should eliminate any possible hazard from skin contact.

#### C. Respiratory Protection

In addition to engineering control recommendations outlined in Section D. below, all personnel upon entering and during the entire time period spent in nickel carbonyl areas should wear a supplied-air respirator with a full facepiece operated in pressure-demand or other positive pressure or continuous flow mode. An auxiliary self-contained breathing apparatus operated in pressure-demand or other positive pressure mode should be readily accessible in the event that emergency conditions warrant extended mobility. Respirators should comply with the standards jointly approved by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health and the Mining Enforcement and Safety Administration (formerly Bureau of Mines) as specified under the provisions of 30 CFR II.

#### D. Engineering and Other Control Technology

Areas where nickel carbonyl is manufactured, used, or stored, should be isolated from all other process areas. In any event, regulated areas, except for outdoor systems, should be maintained under pressure, negative with respect to non-regulated areas. In order to accomplish this, each nickel carbonyl operation should be provided with continuous local exhaust ventilation so that air movement is always from nonregulated to regulated areas. Where a fan is used to affect such air movement, the fan blades and

throat should be made of a nonsparking material. Exhaust air should not be discharged to regulated areas, nonregulated areas or the external environment unless decontaminated. This may be accomplished by discharging exhaust air directly to the fire box of a decontamination furnace, with subsequent discharge of this air to the environment. A portable suction-vent system is recommended so that in the event of a localized leakage of process gas into the regulated area, a hood and suction hose could be placed near the leak for direct removal of the process gas.

Laboratory work involving the use of nickel carbonyl should adhere to the same ventilation and decontamination strategies as stated above. All work should be done under laboratory hoods and only the amount of nickel carbonyl needed for that day's work should be at hand. There should be no connection between the regulated laboratory areas and nonregulated areas through the ventilation system.

#### E. Confined Spaces

Entry into such confined spaces as tanks, pits, process vessels, and trenches should be restricted to authorized personnel only and the following precautionary measures should be instituted:

1. Confined spaces which have contained nickel carbonyl should be inspected and tested for oxygen deficiency, nickel carbonyl, and other contaminants and should be thoroughly ventilated, cleaned, neutralized or washed, and then retested for nickel carbonyl and oxygen prior to and during entry and occupation.
2. Possible entrance of nickel carbonyl into the confined space while work is in progress should be prevented by positive means (e.g., forced-air ventilation of closed spaces during repair of leaks or

equipment maintenance; securing intake valves or disconnecting intake lines).

3. Individuals entering confined spaces where they may possibly be exposed to nickel carbonyl should be equipped with the respiratory protective equipment outlined in Section V.C. of this document. Each individual should also wear a suitable harness with a lifeline tended by another employee outside the space who should also be equipped with the necessary protective equipment, including the aforementioned respiratory apparatus. Communications (visual, voice, signal line, telephone, radio, or other suitable means) should be maintained by the standby person with the employee inside the enclosed space.

#### VI. RECORDKEEPING AND AVAILABILITY OF RECORDS

The employer should keep accurate records on the following:

A. All measurements taken to determine employee exposure to nickel carbonyl, including:

1. Date of measurement
2. Operations being monitored
3. Sampling and analytical method used
4. Number, duration, and results of samples taken
5. Name and airborne exposure concentrations of employees in monitored areas

(records to be replaced on a yearly basis)

B. Measurements demonstrating the effectiveness of mechanical ventilation (e.g., air velocity, static pressure, or air volume), including:

1. Date of measurement
2. Type of measurement taken

3. Result of measurement

(records to be replaced on yearly basis)

C. Employee medical surveillance, including:

1. Name of employee
2. All information obtained from medical examinations which is pertinent to nickel carbonyl exposure
3. Any employee medical complaints relative to exposure to nickel carbonyl
4. Any treatment for exposure to nickel carbonyl and the results of that treatment

All of the aforementioned records should be made available upon request to authorized representatives of the Assistant Secretary of Labor for Occupational Safety and Health and the Director of the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health. All employees or former employees should have access to the exposure measurement records which indicate their own exposure to nickel carbonyl. Employee medical records should be available upon written request to a physician designated by the employee or former employee. Records should be maintained for the duration of the workers' employment and for 40 years following the termination of their employment.

#### VII. SAMPLING AND ANALYTICAL METHODS

No report describing the equipment and methods for continuous personal monitoring of nickel carbonyl was found in the literature. Air sampling for nickel carbonyl is therefore accomplished by an area-monitoring method and, as such, careful attention to the collection points is necessary to ensure a representative sample.

Non-sophisticated instruments and methods have been developed for detecting nickel carbonyl leaks. The color change of a butane flame in the presence of nickel carbonyl has been used for leak testing with a

reported sensitivity of 1-2 ppm (1000-2000 ppb) [42]. A Draeger tube [43] with a sensitivity of 50 ppb and a "Sniffer" [42], with a detection range of 4-70 ppm (4000-70,000 ppb), have also been used.

Three methods have received general acceptance for analyzing ambient levels of nickel carbonyl in the sub-ppb to ppm range, supporting the U.S. standard of 1 ppb as approximately the least detectable level. Two of these methods are instrumental and one is chemical.

The first of the two instrumental methods, Fourier Transform Infrared Absorption Spectroscopy (FTIR), has been used to continuously monitor low levels of nickel carbonyl in the ambient air [42]. A Fourier Transform Michelson Interferometer provided resolution and a 42 mm path-length cell was adequate to obtain a limit of detection of 0.2 ppb, with a precision of  $\pm 0.2$  ppb and an accuracy of  $\pm 0.5$  ppb at the 1.0 ppb level. A thousand-fold excess of carbon monoxide did not interfere in the measurement of 75.0 ppb of nickel carbonyl.

The second generally accepted instrumental method for continuous monitoring of nickel carbonyl is plasma chromatography. The plasma chromatograph has a detection range of 0.2-2.0 ppb [42]. Both the FTIR and the plasma chromatograph are commercially available.

A third instrumental method which is not commercially available has been developed by Stedman and Tammara [2]. They have demonstrated the chemiluminescent detection of nickel carbonyl in air using a reaction with oxygen/ozone and purified CO. The detection limit of their prototype detector is 0.01 ppb. Since their original system was conceived, a portable detector has been built which has a response time of 3-5 seconds, with about a 1.0 ppb detection limit (written communication, David A. Tammara, 1976).

In analyses performed in the field, plasma chromatography and FTIR have been superior to chemical methods for area monitoring of nickel carbonyl at the 1 ppb level [42]. While the major users of nickel carbonyl have been innovative in the development of these superior instrumental methods of analysis, their cost may be prohibitive to the short-term or intermittent user of nickel carbonyl. Only for this reason should the following chemical method be used as an alternative.

The chemical method [42] suggested is a modification of the colorimetric one developed by Brief et al. [44]. In general, an air sample containing nickel carbonyl is bubbled through an alcoholic-iodine solution. The entire bubbler solution is dried and dissolved in dilute acid, this solution is neutralized and alpha-furildioxime is added to form a chloroform-extractable complex with nickel. The absorbance at 425 nanometers (nm) is determined and compared to the absorbance of standards.

The detection limit of nickel carbonyl is in the sub-ppb to ppm range. The specific materials and methods used to carry-out this analysis are as follows:

#### Apparatus

Colorimeter and 1-cm cuvettes  
Air sampler  
Gas washing bottle, 125 ml, with extra coarse  
fritted bubbler tube  
Hot plate  
500 ml Erlenmeyer flasks  
  
Volumetric flasks, pipets, separatory funnels

#### Reagents

Doubly distilled or deionized water  
Alcoholic iodine, 1% (10 g iodine in 990 g  
isopropyl alcohol)  
3% HCL (83 ml of stock acid diluted to 1  
liter with deionized water)  
Alpha-furildioxime, 1% (1 g alpha-furildioxime

in 99 g of 50:50 w/w ethanol/water)  
NaOH, 20% aqueous  
Ammonium hydroxide, concentrated  
Phenolphthalein, 1% in alcohol  
Chloroform  
Standard nickel solution (50 @g Ni/ml -  
powdered nickel, 50 mg, is dissolved in 10 ml  
of 1:1 nitric acid and brought up to volume  
in a 1 liter volumetric flask)

### Procedure

#### 1. Cleaning of equipment

New glassware should be cleaned by soaking it for 24 hours in 5% nitric acid. Rinse thoroughly with warm tap water and then with doubly distilled water. After glassware is used, wash it first in detergent and rinse with tap water. Then soak it in 5% nitric acid for 1 hour, rinse it thoroughly with doubly distilled water, and allow it to dry. Use plastic containers for washing and do not handle the glassware without gloves which are impervious to sweat.

#### 2. Collection of samples

The air sample is bubbled through 80-100 ml of alcoholic-iodine solution. A 0.8 micron millipore filter is placed in front of the scrubber to exclude nickel particulates. For long collection times, the scrubbing liquid volume may be replenished with isopropyl alcohol. The sampling rate is measured at the start and end of the sample period, and the average of the two rates is used to calculate the volume of air sampled. Sampling times usually range from 6-24 hours.

#### 3. Analysis of samples

- a. Prepare at least 3 standard nickel solutions in 3% HCL to cover the range of the analysis (generally 1 to 3  $\mu$ g Ni)
- b. Quantitatively transfer the nickel carbonyl sample from the collector to a 500 ml Erlenmeyer flask
- c. Prepare a reagent "blank" of alcoholic-iodine in isopropyl alcohol
- d. Place the sample and the blank on a hot plate in a fume hood and heat to dryness and expulsion of all iodine vapor



- e. Cool and dissolve the sample in 10 ml of 3% HCL. Handle the blank similarly
- f. Quantitatively transfer the HCL solutions to small separatory funnels. Also place 10 ml of each Ni standard in individual separatory funnels
- g. To each sample, including the standards and the "blank", add 2 drops of phenolphthalein and 6 drops of ammonium hydroxide.
- h. Titrate the contents of each funnel to the phenolphthalein end-point with 20% NaOH and add three drops in excess
- i. Add 3 ml of alpha-furildioxime and 10 ml of chloroform to each separatory funnel
- j. Shake each funnel and its contents for 1 minute and allow chloroform layer to separate
- k. Draw off the chloroform layer, place in a cuvette, and immediately cover the container
- l. Measure the absorbance at 425 nanometers for each sample and subtract the reagent blank

#### 4. Calculations

A calibration curve is drawn by plotting, on linear graph paper, the absorbance versus the concentration of nickel in  $\mu\text{g}$  for each standard. The concentration of Ni in the sample is read from the calibration curve as  $\mu\text{g}$  of nickel. The concentration of nickel carbonyl in the air is calculated as:

$$\text{ppm Ni(CO)}_4 = \frac{\mu\text{g Ni} \times \frac{\text{MW Ni(CO)}_4}{\text{MW Ni}} \times R \times T(\text{deg K}) \times 760 \text{ mm Hg}}{\text{liters sample} \times \text{MW Ni(CO)}_4 \times 298 \text{ deg K} \times P \text{ (mm Hg)}}$$

$$R = \frac{24.45 \text{ L Atm}}{\text{deg K mole}}$$

$$\text{ppb Ni(CO)}_4 = 1000 \times \text{ppm Ni(CO)}_4$$