



## Question From the Classroom

By Bob Becker

### Q. Is it true that there are no plans to ban DHMO, one of the most hazardous substances on the planet?

**A.** You are absolutely correct! Although such notorious substances as DDT, dioxin, and carbon tetrachloride were banned when they turned out to pose serious health and environmental threats, a far more dangerous chemical, dihydrogen monoxide (DHMO), remains legally available for use by industries and ordinary citizens. The Coalition to Ban Dihydrogen Monoxide encourages all of us to become informed and to join them in advocating immediate action to stop the proliferation of this dangerous substance. You can access their Web page at [www.netreach.net/~rjones/no\\_dhmo.html](http://www.netreach.net/~rjones/no_dhmo.html) and their research page at [www.dhmo.org](http://www.dhmo.org).

According to the coalition, DHMO is odorless, tasteless, and potentially deadly. Most human deaths attributed to DHMO are caused by accidental inhalation of its liquid form; however, solid DHMO is known to cause severe, potentially fatal tissue damage. Even moderate DHMO ingestion contributes to sweating and urination; overdoses cause nausea, vomiting, and body electrolyte imbalance. In its gaseous state, DHMO causes severe, sometimes deadly burns. Despite widespread warnings about the hazards, DHMO dependency pervades all cultures; prolonged DHMO substance withdrawal is always fatal.

It's important to read the well-documented facts about the DHMO threat before making your own decision to support the ban.

#### Dihydrogen monoxide:

- is the major component of acid rain.
- contributes to the greenhouse effect.
- was reportedly dropped on American troops during the Vietnam War.
- erodes acres of our natural landscape and valuable farmland.
- accelerates corrosion and rusting of many metals.
- causes many crystalline substances to break apart spontaneously.
- causes dangerous electrical short-circuiting.
- decreases the effectiveness of automobile brakes.
- is present in cancerous tumors.
- is discharged from the eyes of babies suffering from colic.

Widespread DHMO contamination of the environment is evident on every continent. Vast quantities of DHMO permeate every stream, lake, and reservoir in America today—with the cleanest waterways showing the highest concentrations, in excess of 999,000 parts per million. Furthermore, DHMO pollution is global. Not even the Antarctic is immune. At the South Pole, significant DHMO concentrations were recorded deep within polar ice. And this just in: NASA's Mars-orbiting spacecraft *Odyssey* has spotted deposits of DHMO on our neighboring planet. Its presence throughout the solar system is now suspected by NASA scientists.

The economic implications are especially severe. DHMO causes millions of dollars of property damage in virtually

every coastal state in the United States. But interior states are equally at risk. In 1993, there was a severe DHMO exposure in the Midwest, which affected crop failures and property damages with losses estimated



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in the billions of dollars.

Unbelievable though it may seem, DHMO continues to be used in many industries as an industrial solvent and coolant. It's the number-one food additive, even in those foods advertised as "organic" and "natural".

Companies dump vast quantities of waste DHMO into rivers and oceans. Presently, nothing can be done to stop them, because this practice is *still legal!*

Can we afford to continue to ignore the DHMO threat? The U.S. government refuses to ban the production, distribution, or use of this damaging chemical, citing its importance to the economic health of this nation. U.S. military organizations continue to conduct DHMO experiments at tax-

payers' expense. And federally funded research is likely to result in the construction of an increasing number of multibillion-dollar DHMO facilities for generating electrical power.

Are you ready to take action? Before heading for the picket lines, you may wish to do some additional fact-finding about DHMO—this time, with the help of your chemistry textbook. Think back to what you've learned about compound naming and formula writing. Carbon dioxide, for example, has the chemical formula:  $\text{CO}_2$ . What would be the formula for dihydrogen monoxide (DHMO)? And its common name?

**If you're still stumped, read the fine print:** If you still have not put two and two together (or perhaps it should be two and one together), DHMO is *water* — good old, ordinary, everyday  $\text{H}_2\text{O}$ ! Now go back and reread the fact-sheet above. Don't you agree? It's all accurate! You might want to try an experiment of your own. Draw up a DHMO fact-sheet, and see how many signatures you can get on a petition to ban the substance. Several reports show that nearly 90% of the population, after reading the horrific "facts about DHMO", will sign such a document! Now *that's* scary!

**TEACHERS!**  
FIND YOUR COMPLETE  
TEACHER'S GUIDE FOR THIS ISSUE  
[www.chemistry.org/education/chemmatters.htm](http://www.chemistry.org/education/chemmatters.htm)

Dihydrogen monoxide reading

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

1. What are the properties of DHMO?
2. What are most human deaths from DHMO attributed to?
3. What are some of the physical symptoms caused by ingesting DHMO?
4. Where is DHMO found?
5. What are the economic implications of DHMO?
6. What is DHMO used for?
7. What is the formula for DHMO and its common name?
8. Do you want to join the group wishing to ban DHMO? Where you fooled by the article?