LIQUID CAUSTIC SODA (Sodium Hydroxide)
Mercury Grade

CAS Number: 1310-73-2
Synonyms: sodium hydroxide, caustic soda, caustic, lye
Chemical Formula: NaOH
Molecular Weight: 40.00
Description: Caustic soda solutions are colorless and strongly alkaline. They are not combustible and do not support combustion.

Product Overview
Caustic soda is an essential ingredient in many industrial and commercial applications. It is a strong, colorless alkali. Caustic soda is manufactured through the electrolysis of sodium chloride (salt brine). Axiall Corporation produces liquid caustic soda as 50% and 73% solutions in water. Axiall is one of the largest global producers of caustic soda, with four plants in the United States (Lake Charles and Plaquemine, Louisiana; New Martinsville, West Virginia; and Longview, Washington), one in Canada (Beauharnois, Quebec), and a network of bulk terminals in North America. Axiall also has a significant interest in a joint venture that owns and operates a facility producing caustic soda in Taiwan.

Production
Axiall manufactures sodium hydroxide along with chlorine via the chloralkali electrolysis process. Electrolysis is a separation method using a direct current to drive the decomposition reaction of an aqueous solution of sodium chloride (also called brine) into sodium hydroxide and chlorine and hydrogen gas.

\[ 2NaCl + 2H_2O \rightarrow Cl_2 + H_2 + 2NaOH \]

There are several variations in electrolytic cell design which effect product characteristics. Axiall employs all three cell types, diaphragm, mercury, and membrane, in production of liquid caustic soda. The mercury cell design is substantially different from the other two. (For details regarding the diaphragm and membrane cell process, please refer to the Axiall’s Liquid Caustic Soda Product Stewardship Summary.) Rather than chlorine and sodium hydroxide being formed simultaneously in one cell, two distinct processes are employed to form the caustic solution.

In the mercury cell, sodium brine flows between a stationary anode and a moving mercury metal cathode. Chlorine is produced at the anode, but the mercury cathode forms an amalgam with the newly formed sodium metal. This reaction takes place on the surface of the mercury with energy driving the reaction.

\[ 2Na^+ + 2Cl^- + 2Hg \rightarrow 2Na-Hg + Cl_2 \]

This amalgam is fed to another cell for decomposition. It reacts with water to form the caustic solution and hydrogen gas, reforming the mercury to be recycled as cathode for the original electrolytic cell.

\[ 2Na-Hg + 2H_2O \rightarrow 2NaOH + H_2 + 2Hg \]
This resulting sodium hydroxide aqueous solution is very high purity, and has very low salt content. After the initial energy output in the mercury cell, little additional energy is required to finish the product as the caustic is recovered at approximately 50% concentration from the mercury amalgam.

Axiall works with the American Chemistry Council (ACC) to facilitate the highest standard of personal health and safety, as well as environmental preservation during the handling of caustic soda through the Responsible Care® program. Technical service is backed up by research and analytical laboratories.

**Uses**

Caustic soda has a wide variety of applications based primarily on its ability as a strong alkali to react with many substances. It is a stronger base and faster reactant than other alkalis. It is much more stable in water and can be economically stored and transported in liquid form. It also does not form undesirable by-products such as carbon dioxide or other insoluble carbonates. The largest uses for caustic soda are pulp and paper manufacturing, alumina production, de-inking of waste paper, water treatment, and general chemistry. Caustic soda is a basic feedstock in the manufacture of a wide range of chemicals. It is used as an intermediate and a reactant in processes that produce solvents, plastics, synthetic fibers, bleach, adhesives, coatings, herbicides, dyes, inks, and pharmaceuticals such as aspirin. It is also used in soap and detergent, oil and gas, and textile industries as well as to neutralize acidic waste streams and the scrubbing of acidic components from off-gases. With all downstream applications, appropriate registrations and/or approvals may be required. Possible uses are described below:

- **Chemical Production** - The chemical industry consumes nearly 40% of the caustic soda produced as a basic reagent for a multitude of general industrial applications.
- **Pulp and Paper** - Both sulfate and sulfite pulps are purified by removing lignin compounds in the caustic extraction stages of multistage bleach plants. In some kraft mills, caustic soda is also used as a makeup chemical. It is also used as the initial treatment in deinking secondary fibers.
- **Rayon and Cellophane** - Fiber production by the viscose process requires caustic soda at two main stages. Cellulose is treated with caustic soda solution to mercerize it and form alkali cellulose, which is then dissolved in dilute caustic soda solution to form viscose prior to extruding rayon fibers and cellophane films.
- **Alumina Extraction** - Caustic soda is used to digest bauxite ore, precipitating alumina (aluminum oxide). It is also used as an etchant in the finishing and chemical milling of aluminum products.
- **Soapmaking** - Caustic soda saponifies fats into water soluble sodium soaps.
- **Textiles** - Used in scouring, bleaching, desizing, lustering and mercerizing.
- **Petroleum Production and Refining** - Caustic soda is used as an absorbent for carbon dioxide in light petroleum fractions; as an absorbent for sulfides in the purification of various fractions; and with chlorine for hypochlorite sweetening, a treatment step in the removal of various sulfur compounds.
- **Soda Ash Replacement** - Caustic soda can be used interchangeably for many applications in glass, paper, pulp, phosphates and silicates industries.
- **Renewable Fuels** - Caustic soda is used for pH adjustment and formation of in situ sodium methylate in bioethanol and biodiesel processing.
Health Effects

This material is extremely corrosive and highly reactive. Read and follow all instructions on the product label and review the Safety Data Sheet (SDS) to understand and avoid the hazards associated with caustic soda. Do not get caustic soda in eyes, on skin, or on clothing. Eye contact with caustic soda mist or solution usually results in immediate pain and can cause permanent eye damage including blindness. Skin contact may result in irritation, which may not be immediately painful. Caustic soda solution is highly toxic by ingestion and may cause severe burns of the mouth, throat, and stomach even with short exposure. Inhalation of caustic soda as a dust, mist, or aerosol may cause respiratory irritation that can develop into serious lung injury depending on the degree of exposure.

The United States Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and the American Conference of Governmental Industrial Hygienists (ACGIH) have established occupational airborne exposure limits for caustic soda. The OSHA Permissible Exposure Limit (PEL) is an 8 hour Time-Weighted Average (TWA) of 2 mg/m³ (milligrams per cubic meter). The ACGIH Threshold Limit Value (TLV) is a Ceiling Limit of 2 mg/m³. A Ceiling Limit should not be exceeded during any part of the working exposure.

Before handling, it is important that engineering controls are operating and protective equipment requirements and personal hygiene measures are being followed. People working with this chemical should be properly trained regarding its hazards and its safe use.

Environmental Effects

Caustic soda is very toxic to aquatic life and should be kept out of lakes, streams, ponds, or other water sources. Caustic soda does not bioaccumulate due to its high solubility in water.

Exposure Potential

Since caustic soda is corrosive precautions should be taken to minimize potential harm to people, animals and the environment. Potential for exposure may vary depending upon site-specific conditions. When handling caustic soda, refer to the Safety Data Sheet and Product Warning Label and follow all instructions and warnings. Based on the expected uses for caustic soda, exposure could be through:

- **Workplace exposure** - Exposure can occur either in a caustic soda manufacturing facility or in the various industrial facilities that use caustic soda. Caustic soda has been used for more than 100 years by industry. When exposures occur, they are most frequently to the skin and eyes, although oral exposure and ingestion are possible. Good industrial hygiene practices minimize the risk of exposure. Additionally, most processes using caustic soda use closed tanks and vessels.

- **Environmental releases** - In the event of a spill, the focus is on containing the spill to prevent contaminated soil, surface or ground water. Caustic soda can significantly increase the pH of soil and/or water. Industrial spills (releases to soil or water) are infrequent; however, when they do occur, they are controlled by workplace spill programs which include containment around loading and unloading operations and storage tanks and employee training. Many aspects of a spill control program are mandated by federal, state and local requirements. In addition, if a spill occurs, federal reporting may be required. Refer to the Safety Data Sheet for instructions to contain and clean up a spill to minimize exposure.

- **Consumer exposure** - Caustic soda is not sold directly to consumers; however it is an ingredient in some consumer products. Keep all chemical products out of the reach of children.
Safe Handling and Storage
Caustic soda is corrosive and reactive. Always take precautions to minimize potential harm to people, pets, and the environment. When making solutions or diluting, caustic soda should only be added slowly to the surface of cold water while stirring. Do not add to warm or hot water because a violent eruption or an explosive reaction can result. Avoid contact with organic materials and concentrated acids as this may cause violent reactions.

Besides reacting vigorously with many organic and inorganic materials, caustic soda attacks certain metals including aluminum, magnesium, zinc, tin, chromium, brass, and bronzes made with zinc or tin. Since galvanizing is done with zinc, liquid caustic soda will attack galvanized iron surfaces. The reaction may be dangerous because hydrogen is generated and may introduce an explosion hazard. Caustic soda can also react with various food sugars to generate hazardous carbon monoxide gas.

The dilution of caustic soda solutions produces considerable heat and may cause boiling, spattering, or violent eruption. Workers should be properly instructed in dilution procedures and exercise caution. Since caustic soda is shipped hot (50% solution at 100°-180°F and 73% solution at 225°-255°F), users should be careful when unloading and repackaging it.

Packaging and Shipping
Axiall moves liquid caustic soda in tank trucks, tank cars, barges, and ocean going tankers.
- **Tank cars** - Single compartment rail cars are available with nominal capacities of 50 dry short tons
- **Tank trucks** - Axiall ships liquid caustic in bulk tanks trucks with a capacity of 11-16 dry short tons.
- **Barges** - Axiall moves liquid caustic along the US river systems in 700 dry short ton capacity barges
- **Ocean Tanker Ships** - Axiall is one of the few US producers with the ability to load oceanic tanker ships. Customizable capacities are available.

Fire and Explosion Hazards
Caustic soda by itself is nonflammable and nonexplosive. However, caustic soda attacks many metals producing extremely flammable hydrogen gas which can form explosive mixtures with air.

During a fire, promptly isolate the scene by removing all persons from the vicinity of the incident. No action shall be taken without suitable training. Fire-fighters should wear appropriate protective equipment and self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) with a full face-piece operated in positive pressure mode. This material is very toxic to aquatic organisms so fire water contaminated with this material must be contained and prevented from being discharged to any waterway, sewer or drain.

Physical and Chemical Properties
Liquid caustic soda is an odorless and colorless liquid. In all forms, caustic soda is highly corrosive and reactive. Caustic soda reacts readily with metals such as aluminum, magnesium, zinc, tin, chromium, bronze, brass, copper, and alloys containing these metals. Galvanized (zinc coated) materials and contact with acids, halogenated organics, organic nitro compounds, and glycol should be avoided. Caustic soda reacts with most animal tissue, including leather, human skin, and eyes. It also reacts readily with various reducing sugars (i.e., fructose, galactose, maltose, dry whey solids) to produce carbon monoxide. Hazardous carbon monoxide gas can form upon contact with food and beverage products in enclosed vessels and can cause death.
### Properties of Liquid Caustic Soda

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>50%</th>
<th>73%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Boiling Point</strong></td>
<td>288°F (142°C)</td>
<td>372°F (189°C)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Melting Point</strong></td>
<td>50-55°F (10-13°C)</td>
<td>140-144°F (60-62°C)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Solidification Point</strong></td>
<td>41°F (5°C)</td>
<td>140°F (60°C)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Specific Gravity</strong></td>
<td>1.53 @15.6°C</td>
<td>1.71 @90°C</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>pH at 20°C</strong></td>
<td>&gt; 12.5</td>
<td>&gt; 12.5</td>
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### Regulatory Information

The caustic soda Safety Data Sheet contains regulatory information, including Global Chemical Inventory Status information, California Proposition 65 status, Transportation Classifications, SARA Title III information, WHMIS Classifications, and HMIS/NFPA ratings. The following is additional regulatory information.

#### North American Regulatory Information

**Note:** The following information is for the 50% solution. If information is required for the 73% solution, please contact Axiall customer service.

- **FDA Status** - Sodium Hydroxide is designated by FDA as a food additive Generally Recognized as Safe (GRAS) when used in accordance with good manufacturing practices (21 CFR 184.1763). It is specifically approved for use per the following FDA citations: 21 CFR 172.892 (Food Starch-Modified, modified up to 1%), 21 CFR173.310 (Boiler Water Additive), 21 CFR 177.1600 (Polyethylene Resins, Carboxy Modified). It is also cleared for reaction with fatty triglycerides and their fatty acid, alcohol, or dimer derivatives listed in 21 CFR 176.210 to form soaps under 21 CFR 175.105 (Adhesives), 21 CFR 176.210 (Defoaming Agents used in the manufacture of paper and paperboard), and 21 CFR 178.3120 (Animal Glue).

- **CONEG Regulation/Model Toxics in Packaging Legislation** - Lead, cadmium, mercury and hexavalent chromium are not intentionally added to caustic soda, and based on the formula and Axiall’s experience with the product, the sum of the incidental concentration levels of these metals is not expected to exceed 100 parts per million (ppm) by weight.

- **RCRA Hazardous Waste Chemical** - Caustic soda if discarded or spilled, as well as other wastes generated during use of sodium hydroxide or containing sodium hydroxide may exhibit one or more hazardous waste characteristics under 40 CFR 261.24, including D002 – corrosive. (Note: Axiall provides information on U.S. hazardous waste criteria for the product as manufactured. It remains the obligation of the user to evaluate their specific waste and to manage, treat, and dispose of unused material, residues, and containers in accordance with applicable federal, state, and local requirements.)

- **VOC Information** - Caustic soda does not contain constituents that qualify as volatile organic compounds (VOC) based on the definition in 40 CFR 51.100.

- **HAP Information** - Caustic soda does not contain hazardous air pollutants (HAPs) as listed in the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990, 42 USC 7412 (b).

- **Ozone-Depleting Chemicals** - Caustic soda is not/does not contain ozone depleting chemicals (40 CFR 82, Subpart A, Appendix F)
Product Stewardship Summary

- **CERCLA Hazardous Substance** – Caustic soda (sodium hydroxide) appears in the List of Hazardous Substances and Reportable Quantities table (40 CFR 302.4) with a reportable quantity (RQ) of 1,000 pounds (454 Kg).

- **FDA Bioterrorism Act of 2002 Section 305 (Registration of Food Facilities)** - The following facility has been registered with the FDA: New Martinsville, WV, USA (Registration Number 11696337946).

- **TSCA Information** - This product is not currently subject to any rule or order under TSCA Sections 4,5,7,8(a), or 8(d).

**Other Regulatory Information**

- **RoHS/WEEE** - Caustic soda has been reviewed with regard to the EU Directive 2011/65/EU “Restriction on the Use of Certain Hazardous Substances” (RoHS 2). Based on our knowledge of this product and information on the raw material suppliers’ Safety Data Sheets, this product does not contain cadmium, hexavalent chromium, lead, mercury, polybrominated biphenyls (PBBs) or polybrominated diphenyl ethers (PBDEs) at levels greater than the tolerated maximum concentration values established by the directive.

**Product Certifications and Listings**

Note: The following information is for the 50% solution. If information is required for the 73% solution, please contact Axiall customer service.

- **American Water Works Association Standard** - This product conforms to the chemical identity, physical composition and packaging requirements of the AWWA Standard for Sodium Hydroxide (caustic soda), ANSI/AWWA B501-08.

- **NSF Standard 60 Drinking Water Treatment Chemicals** - Caustic soda has the Health Effects listing, and each grade is certified for maximum use levels as noted on the NSF website, which can be viewed at [www.nsf.org/certified/PwsChemicals](http://www.nsf.org/certified/PwsChemicals).

- **NSF White Book** - The NSF International White Book Listings of USDA Authorized or NSF Registered Nonfood Compounds for this product are A2 (Compounds for use in soak tanks), G6 (Treating boilers with edible product contact), 3B (Hog scald agents), 3C (Tripe denuding, bleaching, and neutralizing agents), and L1 (General sewer and drain cleaners). These can be viewed on [www.nsf.org/usda/psnclistings.asp](http://www.nsf.org/usda/psnclistings.asp).

- **USP/NF Residual Solvents** - Although only technically applicable to dry caustic soda, Axiall does not use any Class 1, Class2 or Class 3 (or any combination thereof) residual solvents, as denoted within USP Chapter <467>, during the manufacture of caustic soda products.

- **Kosher Certification** - Caustic soda, including the equipment used in its manufacture, does not come into contact with or contain any animal by-products, animal fats, or animal products, nor does it contain chemical additives that are organic in nature. According to the current policies of the Orthodox Union (OU) caustic soda is acceptable for use in Kosher-related activities without Kosher certification.

- **Halal Certification** - Axiall’s Caustic soda is not Halal certified. However, caustic soda does not contain alcohol, natural L-cysteine extracted from hair or feathers, animal fats and/or extracts, blood of any origin, blood plasma, or pork/or other meat byproducts. Alcohol is not used as processing aid. As such, this product may be acceptable for Halal consideration.

**Additional Product Information**

- **Source** - Caustic soda is derived from a mineral source and has not been derived from plant, animal, synthetic, petroleum or fermentation sources
**Product Stewardship Summary**

- **Allergenic Materials** - Caustic soda is not manufactured using any of the following allergenic materials: carmine/cochineal extracts, celery, colors/color additives, dyes/food dyes, eggs/egg products, seafood/fish/shellfish/crustaceans, flavors, glutens, legumes, milk, monosodium glutamate (MSG), mollusks, mustards, plant nuts/seeds/oils (sesame, sunflower, safflower, canola, etc.), peanuts/peanut products, protein hydrolysates, soy/soybeans/soybean products, spices, sulfites, sulfates, tree nuts/tree nut oils, and wheat.

- **Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy** - Caustic soda is not of animal origin, and, to Axiall’s knowledge, does not contribute to Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathy (TSE)/Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE).

- **Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs)** - Caustic soda is not manufactured with and does not contain genetically modified organisms.

- **Natural Latex Rubber** - Caustic soda is not manufactured with and does not contain natural latex rubber as defined in 21 CFR 801.437(b)(1).

- **Nutritional Value** - Caustic soda does not have nutritional value.

**Product Stewardship**
Axiall Corporation is committed to managing liquid caustic soda so that it can be safely used by its employees and customers. Axiall’s relationships with its customers encourage communication about safety and environmental stewardship.

As a member of the American Chemistry Council (ACC), Axiall is committed to the Responsible Care® initiative, an industry commitment to improve environmental, health, safety and security performance.

**Additional Information**
For more information regarding Axiall’s liquid caustic soda, contact our customer service department by calling 800-243-6774.

**References**
Notice
Prior to its use, the user is responsible for determining the suitability of the product or products covered by this Product Stewardship Summary and for complying with all federal, state, and local laws and regulations in connection with its use. Neither Axiall Corporation nor any of its affiliates shall be responsible for any damages of any kind whatsoever resulting from the use of or reliance on this Product Stewardship Summary or product or products to which it refers.

This Product Stewardship Summary is intended only to provide a general summary of the potential hazards associated with the product or products described herein. It is not intended to provide detailed information about potential health effects and safe use and handling information and, although Axiall Corporation believes this information is correct, Axiall Corporation makes no warranties as to its completeness or accuracy. Appropriate literature has been assembled which provides information concerning the health and safety precautions that must be observed when handling the Axiall Corporation product(s) mentioned in this document. Before working with any of these products, users must read and become familiar with the available information on product hazards, proper use, and handling. Information is available in several forms, such as safety data sheets (SDS) and product labels. A copy of Axiall’s SDS for liquid caustic soda can be obtained by going to the company’s website www.axiall.com.

This information is subject to change without notice.

Date: Initial Issue – October 2013