

NRT Quick Reference Guide: Sarin (GB)

For References, Please See: Key References Cited/Used* in National Response Team (NRT) Quick Reference Guides (QRGs) for Chemical Warfare Agents. QRGs are intended for Federal OSC/RPMs

Agent Characteristics	Agent Classification: Schedule 1 Chemical Warfare Nerve Agent CAS: 107-44-8; Formula: C ₄ H ₁₀ FO ₂ P ; Molecular Weight: 140.10 g/mol Description: Colorless & odorless liquid when pure; brown liquid with a fruity odor in impure form. GB is a lethal cholinesterase inhibitor with a mechanism of toxicity similar to organophosphate insecticides, only much more potent. GB is more easily generated and more volatile than chemical warfare agents GA, GD, GF, HD, Lewisite, & VX. Environmental breakdown products of GB, including methylphosphonic acid (MPA) and isopropyl methylphosphonic acid (IMPA), are relatively non-toxic. Persistence: GB is considered a “very low persistent” agent. Vapor: minutes-hours; liquid: 2-24 hours. Persistence will depend upon the amount & purity of the agent, method of release, environmental conditions & the types of surfaces & materials impacted. Porous, permeable, organic or polymeric materials such as carpets & vinyl tiles can act as sinks for absorbing GB vapors & liquids, prolonging persistence.						
	Physical properties are listed at/near STP unless otherwise indicated. Conversion Factors: ppm = mg/m ³ x 0.1745; mg/m ³ = ppm x 5.730 Vapor Pressure: 2.94 mm Hg						

Sampling	<p>Note: This section on sampling contains general guidelines & does not replace the need for a site-specific sampling plan. See reference list for specifics.</p> <p>Sampling Concerns: Detection, sampling equipment & procedures, & analytical techniques will be highly site-specific & depend on: 1) physical state of the agent; 2) type of surfaces contaminated (e.g., porous vs. nonporous); 3) the purpose of sampling (e.g. characterization, decon efficacy & clearance); & 4) specific laboratory requirements. Few laboratories currently have capability to determine GB, particularly for large numbers of samples & in all types of media. The EPA is in the process setting up analytical assets for chemical agent analysis of environmental samples, see ANALYSIS below. For sampling questions, call the EPA/HQ-EOC at 202-564-3850</p>
	<p>Sample Locations & Planning: Initially consider air sampling to ensure worker safety & to determine if there is a vapor plume which could impact other areas. Characterization sampling is initiated by targeted or judgmental sampling to identify "hot spots", potential agent flow paths, & media or objects potentially acting as sinks. Additional biased or random sampling can be used to determine the extent of potential contamination or to verify the efficacy of decon. More thorough probabilistic sampling (e.g., grid, statistical approach) will be required for the clearance phase or if there are large areas of uncertainties. Because GB is generally not persistent, air sampling to "clear areas" should be included in the sampling plan.</p>
	<p>Note: GB breaks down in most environmental conditions to numerous breakdown products, especially MPA and IMPA, which are relatively non-toxic and may be used as a marker to determine the extent of contamination of the parent GB. See ANALYSIS section below to ensure sampling procedures are compatible with all analytes.</p> <p>Types of Samples: Air (Vapors are heavier than air): Samples are collected using appropriate solid phase absorbent (tubes) or air sampler (e.g. SUMMA canister) at breathing zone level (~5 ft.) to assess inhalation exposure and at ground levels (~ 6 in.) to assess off gassing at surfaces.</p> <p>Water: Water should be collected in appropriate containers with addition of appropriate de-chlorinating agents and preservatives; G-agents are unlikely to persist in water.</p> <p>Soil: For localized "hot spot" areas where soil deposition may occur, surface soil samples should be taken from a non-vegetated area to a depth of less than one inch. Sub-surface soil samples may not be necessary unless a large amount of liquid was poured on the ground, or if an underlying aquifer is endangered.</p> <p>Surface Wipes: Wipe samples are often desired to indicate absence of G-agents on non-porous surfaces. Concurrent air monitoring is recommended.</p> <p>Bulk: For hot spot areas where liquid G-agent deposition may occur on porous surfaces (e.g., concrete, asphalt), actual pieces or cores of contaminated surface may be obtained using appropriate tools (scabbling, coring or drills) for subsequent laboratory extraction analysis. Bulk samples of suspected sink materials may be recommended to rule out secondary vapor phase disposition or absorption of GB into these materials.</p> <p>Other Sample Matrices: Contact EPA/HQ-EOC at 202-564-3850 for sampling instructions.</p>
	<p>Sample Packaging & Shipping: The packaging & shipping of samples are subject to strict regulations established by DOT, CDC, USPS, OSHA, & IATA. Contact the sample-receiving laboratory to determine if they have additional packaging, shipping or labeling requirements.</p>
Anal- ysis	<p>CAUTION: Many labs may not be able to perform analysis on all matrices (e.g., wipes & soil). The Environmental Response Laboratory Network (ERLN) will use uniform, compatible sample prep & analytical methods. (See http://www.epa.gov/sam). For access to the nearest ERLN laboratory specially trained and equipped for in GB analysis, contact the EPA/HQ-EOC at 202-564-3850.</p>
Decontamination/Cleanup	<p>Decon/Cleanup Planning: Once site controls are in place, develop a site specific decon/cleanup plan. Decontamination may require a "tiered approach" using a variety of techniques and products. Call the EPA/HQ-EOC at 202-564-3850 for more information.</p> <p>General Considerations: A cost vs. benefit evaluation should be undertaken for each decon strategy and approach which considers: public safety, total cost, impact on the facility, wastes generated, as well as the time the facility or item will be out of service and any socio-economic, psychological, and/or security impacts that may result. Large volumes of decon wastes may be generated which will need to be collected, treated and disposed of properly. Waste handling and disposal must be addressed as early in the decon and cleanup process as possible, see WASTE DISPOSAL section.</p> <p>Disposal Option: The urgency to restore a facility as quickly as possible may result in the outright and timely removal and disposal of contaminated materials. Certain materials may be resistant to decon formulations, or may be cheaper to discard and replace then to decon and restore.</p> <p>Monitored Natural Attenuation: GB is degraded via natural processes. Environmental monitoring must be maintained during decon and recovery phases. Monitored natural attenuation may require institutional controls (e.g. access restriction and contaminant containment measures). The time to achieve clearance must be considered in the overall cost/benefit evaluation. This option is more passive than other options but is nondestructive to materials.</p> <p>Fix-in-Place Option: The contaminated area may be resistant to decontamination products or may be unable or impractical to be treated. Physical barriers can be used to separate and immobilize the agent contamination from coming into contact with the environment or the public. This can be a temporary or permanent solution.</p> <p>Decon Strategy: A decon strategy can be developed by designating contaminated areas into 3 broad categories: 1) surfaces or hot-spots, 2) large volumetric spaces, and 3) sensitive equipment or items. Areas in each category may be treated using one or more unique decon processes in a tiered approach to the overall site specific decon strategy.</p> <p>Surfaces/Hot Spots: This category is for areas smaller in size but with higher levels of agent contamination. They may require more rigorous decontamination products and methods. Decontamination of GB occurs mainly through hydrolysis, which may be catalyzed (sped up) by hypochlorites. 1) Hypochlorite Solutions: Hypochlorite can be very damaging (corrosive) to certain surfaces and materials and should be rinsed thoroughly afterwards. Household bleach solutions (5.0% sodium hypochlorite) are very effective for GB with efficacy achieved with contact time of 15-60 minutes depending on surface material. Calcium hypochlorite, present in commercial products, such as HTH (10% hypochlorite solution), is better for surfaces with high concentrations of liquids in localized areas. 2) Hydroxide (e.g. sodium, potassium – 10 % solution) reacts rapidly with GB but solutions are very damaging to many surfaces and should be rinsed thoroughly after use. 3) Other high pH solutions, such as sodium carbonate (10% solution) have been shown to decon GB but slower than decon with sodium or potassium hydroxide.</p> <p>Large Volumetric Spaces: This category is for areas larger in size but with lower levels of agent contamination. They may require less aggressive but more broadly applied decon products and methods. 1) Monitored Natural Attenuation is more passive than other decon options and is non destructive to materials. This option may be preferable given the scope and severity of contamination especially given GB's relative high volatility. 2) Forced or Hot Air ventilation methods are recommended for vapor plume contamination or low concentration of GB in large volumetric spaces or open areas; efficacy typically can be achieved in hours with less waste and adverse impacts to materials.</p> <p>Sensitive Equipment and Items: Forced or Hot Air ventilation may be used for GB and can be used either in-situ or ex-situ to decon these items</p> <p>CAUTION: Decon products may have unique safety/PPE requirements due to their own toxicity or that of breakdown products during use (e.g., bleach results in chlorine vapors). Proprietary decon foams and gels such as DF-200®, CASCAD®, Decon Green®, or L-Gel® have been shown to be effective against GB on the order of minutes to hours, but not all have been thoroughly tested. Availability, cost and the need for specialized equipment may limit their use early in the response. Dirt, grime, and other coatings can reduce the efficacy of decon; pre-cleaning surfaces with soap and water may be needed before the application of decon formulations but resulting pre-cleaning rinsates may contain and spread agent.</p> <p>Verification of Decon: Site & situation specific. Please contact NRC for initial notification (1-800-424-8802) and EPA/HQ-EOC (202-564-3850) post notification.</p>
Waste Disposal	<p>CAUTION: Hazardous waste transportation & disposal are regulated federally; however more stringent regulations may exist under state authority. These regulations differ from state-to-state. Detailed state regulations can be found at www.envcap.org.</p> <p>Waste Disposal Planning: Waste disposal for agent-contaminated wastes generated from the decontamination & disposal activities will be problematic. Landfills willing to take these wastes may be limited & incineration may be prohibitively expensive or impractical. All waste disposal options should be investigated as early into the response process as possible. Transportation of the agent contaminated wastes from the site to the landfill or incinerator may be problematic as well. First, agreements must be reached between the waste sender & acceptor BEFORE transport, followed by timely public notification of the transport & disposal phases. Transportation of hazardous waste may cross several states and localities, which may exceed federal regulations. Requirements for transporting hazardous materials, & procedure for exemption, are specified in http://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/safety-security/hazmat/complyhmr.htm#hmp. GB is classified as a Division 6.1 material & is shipped as Hazard Zone A. The U.S. EPA has developed a web-based Incident Waste Management Planning & Response Tool which contains links to guidance related to waste transportation, contact information for potential treatment, disposal facilities, & state regulatory offices, packaging guidance to minimize risk to workers, & guidance to minimize the potential for contaminating the treatment or disposal facility. Access to the EPA's web based disposal tool requires pre-registration (http://www2.ergweb.com/bdrtool/login.asp).</p>