

Toxic materials which would be effective as weapons may be classified in three categories as follows:-

I. Vapour Group

This group of possible CW agents are toxic materials which are volatile liquids, which can be loaded into munitions as liquids but which readily vaporize on release, either because of the heat of explosion or by evaporation in air, releasing large clouds of highly concentrated toxic vapour. Examples of agents of this type are Phosgene, Hydrogen Cyanide and non-persistent nerve gases. They produce their effects by inhalation over short periods of time (seconds to minutes), either by effects on the lung itself (e.g. phosgene), or through absorption through the lungs into the blood stream to cause subsequent systemic poisoning (e.g. hydrogen cyanide, non-persistent nerve gas).

II. Percutaneous Group

This group of dangerous materials are toxic substances which are absorbed through the intact skin. They are generally liquids of low volatility, which on release remain as slowly evaporating droplets. The vapours are also toxic (by inhalation), but present at low concentrations. These agents may attack the skin itself (e.g. mustard), or may be absorbed through the skin into the blood stream (e.g. persistent nerve gas), thus causing general systemic poisoning, or may be absorbed by inhalation of low concentrations of vapour over comparatively long periods of time (minutes to hours).