Benzene Encyclopedia Article

Benzene

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Benzene

A hydrocarbon with chemical formula C_6H_6, benzene contains six **carbon** atoms in a ring structure. A clear volatile liquid with a strong odor, it is one of the most extensively used **hydrocarbons**. Because it is an excellent solvent and a necessary component of many industrial **chemicals**, including **gasoline**, benzene is classified by United States federal agencies as a known human **carcinogen** based on studies that show an increased incidence of nonlymphocytic **leukemia** from occupational exposure and increased incidence of neoplasia in rats and mice exposed by inhalation and gavage. Because of these cancer-causing properties, benzene has been listed as a hazardous air pollutant under Section 112 of the **Clean Air Act**.