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This feature focuses on a reagent chosen by a postgraduate, highlighting the uses and preparation of the reagent in current research.

Application of Terminal Electrophilic Phosphinidene Complexes

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Introduction

Phosphinidenes are phosphorus analogues of carbenes in which phosphorus is monovalent with an incomplete octet of electrons. Phosphinidene complexes readily react with alkenes, whereas free phosphinidenes do not react with alkenes. This indicates that the coordination of these unstable phosphorus compounds1 with metallic species enhances their stability as well as reactivity by increasing the electrophilicity of the phosphorus atom. A number of precursors like phosphiranes,2 phospholenes,2 norbornadienes,3 2H-azaphosphirene4 and phosphirene5 metal complexes are known to generate terminal phosphidene complexes in situ via their thermal or photochemical decomposition. These phosphidene complexes are short-lived intermediates and their existence is proved by trapping them with substituted alkenes,6 acetylenes,7 and organic nitriles8 via cycloaddition reactions resulting in the formation of a variety of P-heterocycles. Recently, insertion of phosphidene complexes into carbon–halogen bonds has been established,9–11 which affords a number of novel organophosphorus compounds.

Preparation

In situ generation of phosphidene intermediates is carried out under strictly anhydrous/moisture-free conditions, that is, in an inert atmosphere of dry nitrogen gas.

Abstracts

(A) Phosphidene complexes in the presence of alkenes6 and substituted acetylenes7 undergo [2+1]-cycloaddition reactions affording a variety of three-membered P-heterocycles.

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(B) A phosphinidene complex in the presence of an organic nitrile yields a Lewis acid-base adduct which serves as a 1,3-dipole for [3+2] cycloaddition of the organic nitrile and the substituted acetylenes.

(C) A reaction of phosphinidene with CCl₄ results in transfer of a Cl atom of CCl₄ to the phosphorus atom giving dichloroorganophosphines. Further, oxidation of these dichloroorganophosphines with chalcogens (O, S, Se) affords structurally characterised organophosphonic dichlorides, where thiophosphonic dichloride is the first example of structurally characterised organothiophosphonic dichlorides.

(D) Insertion of a phosphinidene complex into carbon–halogen bonds provides a novel route for the selective synthesis of prochiral phosphine complexes. A number of such complexes have been prepared and most of them have been structurally characterised by single crystal X-ray crystallography.

(E) Terminal electrophilic phosphinidene complexes yield a P=C double bond with organic isocyanides.

(F) Reactions of terminal electrophilic phosphinidene complexes with azulene, with or without a copper catalyst, are very interesting in view of insertion of a phosphinidene complex into a carbon–hydrogen bond.

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References