

MATERIAL SAFETY DATA SHEETS

Your Key to Chemical Safety

Living in the modern world, you probably are aware that the use of chemicals offers convenience and progress at home and work. Naturally, you want to avoid dangerous overexposure to chemicals, especially on the job. Such overexposure is possible no matter where you work, even in an office or light industry.

Your company's Hazard Communication, or HazCom, program was created to protect your health and safety. Three important elements are at the heart of your HazCom program: warning labels on containers, training on the safe usage and handling of chemicals, and Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS).

Know What's On An MSDS

MSDSs are printed pages which give you all the critical information you need about how to use, transport, and store chemicals in order to protect yourself, as well as what

to do in case of emergencies and overexposure. Information on MSDSs includes:

- ▶ The chemical's name or names
- ▶ Name, address, and phone of the manufacturer
- ▶ List of the chemical's ingredients
- ▶ Permissible Exposure Limits (PEL) or Threshold Limit Value (TLV)
- ▶ What conditions or other substances will cause the chemical to catch fire, explode, melt, or turn into dangerous gases
- ▶ How it usually looks and smells
- ▶ How to put out a fire involving the chemical
- ▶ What to do if it spills or leaks
- ▶ How to prevent dangerous exposure
- ▶ Health hazards such as skin irritant or cancer-causing
- ▶ Symptoms of overexposure
- ▶ What to do if you are overexposed
- ▶ When the MSDS was prepared

The information for each chemical's MSDS is put together by the manufacturer or distributor for that chemical. The sheets often look different from each other, but they still provide the same information. The law requires your employer to keep MSDSs up to date and to send the MSDS to your doctor or designated representative if you request it.

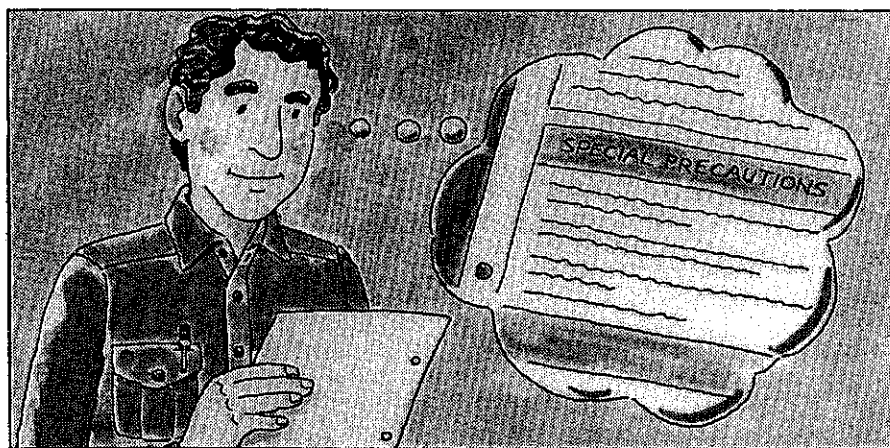
Know Where The MSDS Is Kept

MSDSs must be readily accessible to employees. A posted sign may tell you where, and you can also find out by reading your company's written HazCom program. If you're not sure where to find MSDSs, your supervisor or your company's HazCom contact will make them available to you—it's the law.

Important Protection

You should always read the MSDS *before* you begin a job using a chemical. Even if you've used the chemical before, the manufacturer may have changed its formula which may change the steps you should take to protect yourself. Taking proper precautions listed on the MSDS, such as wearing a respirator, can prevent serious long-term illnesses.

If you don't understand something on the MSDS, or have questions about your company's HazCom program, ask your supervisor or company contact. Your company knows that HazCom works best if you are fully informed and involved.



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