

Material Safety Data Sheets

Meeting Objective

To remind employees of the important information contained in material safety data sheets (MSDSs) and to emphasize their use as an effective tool to minimize chemical exposure while on the job. OSHA requires that employees be familiar with all hazardous chemicals in their workplace.

Suggested Material to Have on Hand

- Copies of the MSDSs that apply to your operation; such as, propane, methanol, paint, diesel fuel, solvents and the like.

Overview

According to the OSHA standards, employees have a right to know about the chemical hazards in their workplace and ways to protect themselves from those hazards. That's the basic purpose of OSHA's Hazard Communication (HazCom) standard.

Knowing the whereabouts and how to read and understand MSDSs is the basic premise of the HazCom Standard. MSDSs are the single best place to look for everything you need to know about a chemical's hazards and how to work with that chemical safely. Employees should keep in mind that although propane probably represents the greatest risk, there are many other chemicals in the workplace that present a hazard.

OSHA requires that all employers develop a Hazcom program; additionally, they must ensure that MSDSs are provided for each hazardous chemical in the workplace. Workers must know where these MSDSs are located and they must have easy access to them at all times. Each MSDS must provide the following information:

- Name of the chemical
- Manufacturer name and address
- Why the chemical is hazardous
- Hazards of the chemical
- How to handle it safely
- What personal protective measures must be used while working with or around it
- What to do if exposed to it
- How to handle spills and emergency situations

Every MSDS is likely a little different from the next MSDS, that's why it's important that each MSDS be read and examined very carefully. Employers and workers should always pick out the major categories of information listed above to determine how to best protect themselves.

Dual Role of Responsibility

Employers and employees should know and understand that each have solemn responsibilities under the Hazcom standard. Employers must provide training, MSDSs for every hazardous chemical in the worksite and they must also make it easy for employees to access this information. Employees, on the other hand, must exercise responsibility to learn all they can about the hazardous chemicals in the worksite and refer to MSDSs when they have a question. Most importantly, employees should never use a hazardous chemical unless they are fully and completely informed about all its hazards and safe handling practices.

Suggested Discussion/Training Topics With Employees

1. The location of all MSDS at your facility
2. The location of the company's HazCom Program
3. What jobs expose employees to various chemical hazards
4. Pick out three (3) MSDSs of the most used hazardous chemicals in the workplace, make copies of each, pass out copies to all attendees and discuss the hazardous properties of each

Wrap-Up

MSDSs provide a wealth of detail on a chemical's makeup, its hazards, and the steps you can take to work with it safely.

The government has made a big point of requiring MSDSs, determining what information they must contain, and emphasizing that MSDSs have to be available to employees. Employees have a right to know about chemical hazards on the job and how to protect themselves from them. But rights also come with obligations. Employees have a right to know and an obligation to use the information to protect themselves.

August 2007 Test Material Safety Data Sheets

Name: _____

Date: _____

Instructions: Read and answer each of the following questions. When complete, grade the test and review incorrect answers so each employee is “armed” with the correct answers before they leave the training.

1. MSDSs are mainly discussed in OSHA’s _____ standard :
 - a. Personal Protective Equipment
 - b. Fall Protection
 - c. Electrical Safety
 - d. Hazard Communication

2. Other than propane, the typical propane facility has many other chemical hazards that employees should be aware of:
 - a. True
 - b. False

3. Employees must provide a 24-hour notice to their employers in order to view an MSDS:
 - a. True
 - b. False

4. Only employees have specific responsibilities concerning the use of MSDSs at their facility
 - a. True
 - b. False

5. A company’s HazCom program must be available for employees to refer to at their convenience.
 - a. True
 - b. False

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Answer Sheet

1. d.
2. a.
3. b.
4. b.
5. a.