



ALABAMA MUNICIPAL INSURANCE CORPORATION
MUNICIPAL WORKERS COMPENSATION FUND, INC.

Loss Control Division



MATERIAL SAFETY DATA SHEETS (MSDS)

Date: _____ Time: _____ Department: _____ Person Conducting: _____

Meeting Objective: To train employees to recognize the categories of information included on an MSDS, and understand how the MSDS can protect them against chemical hazards.

I. INTRODUCTION

The law says that employees have a right to know about the hazards of materials and substances that they may come into contact within the workplace. The rules governing an employee's right to know are part of OSHA's Hazard Communication Standard, (HazCom). These rules state that manufacturers, importers, distributors, and suppliers are required to provide employers with MSDSs for each of their hazardous chemicals. Employers must then keep copies of MSDSs in the workplace and make them available to any employee who asks to see them. These rules assure that an employee can be informed about any chemicals hazards. The maintenance and understanding of Material Safety Data Sheets is the key to any hazard communication program in the workplace. This is because the MSDS is the one document that clearly spells out:

- A. The identity and characteristics of hazardous chemicals
- B. The types of hazards chemicals might present.
- C. The potential adverse effects of exposure to hazardous chemicals
- D. How workers can protect themselves from exposure to hazardous chemicals
- E. What to do in case of exposure to hazardous chemicals or in an emergency involving hazardous chemicals

One might notice that labels often provide some of this information. The information found on labels, however, is not usually as complete and comprehensive as the information on MSDSs/ Employees must be able to read MSDSs in order to satisfy OSHA's HazCom requirements.

II. A SECTION GUIDE TO THE MSDS

All MSDSs are not required to look alike. However they must contain all the required information in a format that can be easily read. Fortunately, most chemical manufacturers use the OSHA standard MSDS form with eight sections that provide the following information.

- A. Section I (Identity) – This section provides the name of the chemical, the manufacturer, and how to contact the manufacturer.
- B. Section II (Hazardous Ingredients) – This section describes the specific ingredients that are hazardous, along with the limits to exposure as required by law. The permissible exposure limit, or PEL, is commonly included in this section.

- C. Section III (Physical and Chemical Characteristics) – This section describes what the chemical normally looks and smells like. It also describes the chemicals characteristics i.e. vapor density, solubility in water, and specific gravity. In addition, this section states the conditions under which the chemical may change, i.e. boiling point, melting point, and evaporation rate.
- D. Section IV (Fire and explosion Data) – This section tells under which conditions the chemical might catch fire or explode. It also describes how to fight a fire involving the chemical.
- E. Section V (Reactivity Data) – This section tells about the stability of the chemical and what conditions should be avoided in order to prevent an adverse chemical reaction. It also explains what could happen if the chemical comes into contact or is mixed with other substances.
- F. Section VI (Health Hazard Data) – This section describes how the chemical might enter the body, i.e. ingesting, inhaling, or skin contact and the possible effects and symptoms of exposure. It also gives the emergency and first aid procedures that should be taken if exposure occurs.
- G. Section VII (Precautions) – This section tells what to do in case the chemical is released or spilled. It also describes how to store and handle the chemical safely and how to dispose of the chemical and contaminated materials.
- H. Section VIII (Control Measures) – This section describes how to limit or prevent exposure to the chemical. These measures should be taken whenever the chemical is handled or disposed of during normal use. These measures include the use of proper ventilation, respiratory protection, protective gloves, eye protection, and other protective clothing.

Some of the information included on an MSDS form appears to be highly technical. Terms such as flash point, permissible exposure limit, and specific gravity may not mean much to most people. These terms, however, are important for the purposes of identifying chemical hazards. Employees should know that in the event they do not understand something they read on an MSDS, they should ask a supervisor who can explain the information to them. Employees should understand that, under the law, they have a right to know.

CONCLUSION

Hazardous chemicals can pose a very serious threat to employees’ health and safety. Employees should understand that MSDSs are the most comprehensive source of information about these potential hazards. They must realize that they have a responsibility to follow the requirements that are meant to prevent accidents, injuries and illness to themselves or fellow employees. Finally, employees should know how to access and understand MSDSs for the chemicals they could be exposed to.

Explain where MSDSs are kept and how to obtain a copy. Make a list of the chemicals used in your facility. Pick an MSDS for a commonly used chemical and go through each section explaining to workers how that information might protect them.

SIGNATURES OF ALL THOSE IN ATTENDANCE
