Toolbox Talk

HAZARD COMMUNICATIONS ("HAZCOM")

Employees have the "Right to Know" hazards of the chemicals in their workplace, which is why OSHA established the HAZCOM standard for project workers.

This information is provided to you in three ways: (1) labels on the containers of chemicals, (2) a safety data sheet (SDS) for each chemical in use at the worksite-maintained in an easily accessible location, and (3) extensive training sessions on the chemicals you use on your job and how to protect yourself from being harmed by them.

What You Can Find on a Chemical Label

- The name of the chemical
- The name, address and telephone number of the manufacturer(s) or importer(s)
- The chemical code number
- One of three signal words indicating the danger level of the chemical: "Warning," "Caution" or "Danger"
- The word "Poison" if the chemical is highly toxic
- Physical hazards (flammable, explosive, corrosive, etc.)
- Health hazards (eye, lung, and skin irritation, burns, etc.)

Safety Data Sheets:

SDSs include the following sections, headings, and associated information in the order listed:

Section 1) Identification includes product identifier; manufacturer or distributor name, address, phone number emergency phone number recommended use; restriction on use.

Section 2) Hazard(s) identification includes all hazards regarding the chemical; required label elements.

Section 3) Composition includes information on chemical ingredients & trade secret claims.

Section 4) First aid measures include important symptoms/effects, acute, delayed, and required treatment.

Section 5) Firefighting measures lists, suitable extinguishing techniques, equipment; hazards from fire.

Section 6) Accidental release measures list emergency procedures, protective equipment, and proper methods of containment and cleanup.

Section 7) Handling and storage lists precautions for safe handling and storage, including incompatibilities.

Section 8) Exposure controls/personal protection lists OSHA's Permissible Exposure Limits (PELs); Threshold Limit Values (TLVs); appropriate engineering controls; personal protective equipment (PPE).

Section 9) Physical and chemical properties lists with chemical's characteristics.

Section 10) Stability and reactivity lists chemical stability and the possibility of hazardous reactions.

Section 11) Toxicological information includes routes of exposure, related symptoms, acute effects, chronic effects, and numerical measures of toxicity.

Section 12) Ecological information identifies the impact that the chemical may have on the environment.

Section 13) Disposal considerations describe methods of disposal for chemical & contaminated packaging.

Section 14) Transport information identifies Dangerous Goods transportation classification information and any special precautions required for transport.

Section 15) Regulatory information indicates safety, health, and environmental regulations specific to the product.

Section 16) Other information, includes the data of preparation or last revision.

Chemical toxicity can vary by how it enters your body. Chemicals can enter your body via ingestion (e.g., swallowing), inhalation (e.g., through the lungs), or absorption through your skin. It's important to follow SDS recommendations such as wearing the appropriate PPE to protect yourself from exposure.

Your Company's Program:

Your supervisor, or the company's HAZCOM contact, can give you details on your company's program. Each company's approach is different, but most programs let you know:

- When and how your next training will take place.
- What SDSs tell you and where they are located.
- A list of hazardous chemicals in each work area.
- How to obtain a written copy of your company's own HAZCOM Program.
- How site evaluations will be performed.
- Which protective measures and equipment are required or suggested for each chemical.
- How outside contractors will be trained.
- Special procedures for occasional hazards and unlabeled pipes.
- Results of chemical manufacturers' reviews of scientific studies on each chemical.

Safety Checklist:

- I always read the warning label every time I work with the chemical.
- I make sure each chemical in my area has a legible, unobstructed label.
- If I don't understand the information on the label, I ask for help.
- I always follow the instructions on the label.
- If I need to know more information about a chemical, I read the SDS.
- I know what emergency and first aid procedures to follow if exposed to a chemical.
- I report to my supervisor if I notice a lack of safety policies in my workplace.

Partners in Protection:

You and your employer are partners in protecting you against chemical hazards. Your responsibilities begin with reading carefully the important information on all labels, SDSs, and training materials that your employer gives you before the work begins. Know and follow all the safe work practices required for any chemicals you encounter. If you don't understand something, ask your supervisor to explain it. Your health and safety in the future may depend on your following the correct procedure.