Toolbox Talk

HAZARD COMMUNICATIONS ("HAZCOM")

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

This information is provided in three ways: (1) labels on the containers of chemicals, (2) a safety data sheet (SDS), maintained in an easily accessible location, for each chemical in use at the worksite, and (3) training on the chemicals used for a specific job that include protection procedures.

What Can be Found 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 this order:

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) T**oxicological 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 the body. Chemicals can enter via ingestion (e.g., swallowing), inhalation (e.g., through the lungs), or absorption through skin. It's important to follow SDS recommendations such as wearing the appropriate PPE to be protected from exposure.

The Company's Program:
The supervisor, or the company's HAZCOM contact, can provide details of the company's program. Each company's approach is different, but most programs cover the following:

- What details the SDSs provide and where they are located.
- A list of hazardous chemicals in each work area.
- How to obtain a written copy of the 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' review on each chemical.
- When and how the next training will take place.

Safety Checklist:

- Warning labels should always read before working with a chemical.
- Make sure each chemical in an area has a legible, unobstructed label.
- If a worker doesn't understand the information on the label, they should ask for help.
- The instructions on the labels should always be followed.
- If more information about a chemical is required, it may be on the SDS.
- Know what emergency and first aid procedures to follow if exposed to a chemical.
- Report any unsafe work practices in the workplace.

Partners in Protection:
Workers and employers are partners in protecting everyone against chemical hazards. The responsibilities begin with carefully reading the important information on all labels, SDSs, and training materials provided by the employer before the work begins. Know and follow all the safe work practices required for any chemicals encountered. If something is not understood, then a supervisor should be asked to explain it. The health and safety of everyone depends on following the correct procedure.