

READING MATERIAL SAFETY DATA SHEETS

Effective Protection You Can Depend On

The Material Safety Data Sheet, or MSDS, is written information that can help protect you from overexposure to chemicals you find on the job. The MSDS is part of your company's Hazard Communications Program. Each company can design its own MSDS form, and the sections may be in different order. But, the basic kinds of information on any MSDS will be the same.

Chemical Name

Lists the identity of the substance (the name on the label), date the MSDS was prepared, the name and address of the manufacturer, and usually a phone number for emergencies and more information.

Hazardous Ingredients/Chemical Identity

Includes names of substances in the chemical that might be dangerous, and safe exposure limits such as Permissible Exposure Limit or PEL (set by OSHA) or the Threshold Value Limit or TVL. Also lists common names for the chemical.

Physical Characteristics

Describes many physical qualities of the chemical, and lets you know what's usual or safe. For example, how the chemical looks and smells; boiling and melting temperatures (important in case a chemical might become a gas you could breathe); evaporation rate (known as percent volatile); how easily the chemical dissolves; and how heavy it is (this tells you if it will sink, float, or dissolve in water).

Fire and Explosion Data

Tells you the lowest temperature when the chemical could catch fire ("flash point"). Lets you know if it's flammable (catches fire below 100° F) or combustible (catches fire above 100° F). Lists the best way to put out a fire involving that chemical.

Reactivity

Describes what happens if this chemical comes in contact with air, water, or other chemicals. Describes conditions (like heat) or materials (like water) that can cause the chemical to react by burning, exploding, or releasing dangerous vapors. The chemical is called "incompatible" or "unstable" with these conditions or substances.

Health Hazards

Lists ways the chemical might enter your body, like splashing on your skin or being breathed in as vapor as well as possible symptoms of overexposure. Lets you know if overexposure might make existing medical conditions worse, and describes emergency first aid procedures.

Usage, Handling, And Storage

Describes how to clean up an accidental spill, leak, or release, including special procedures. Tells you how to handle, store, and dispose of chemicals safely. Remember, if there is an accident, notify your supervisor immediately, and take care of it yourself only if you are trained to do so and are wearing the proper equipment.

Special Protection And Precautions

Explains special Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and other equipment to use when working with the chemical, special procedures, extra health or safety information, signs that should be posted, and other information not covered in other sections.

MATERIAL SAFETY DATA SHEET

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