



The Importance of Hazard Communication

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One way to promote workplace safety is through thorough hazard communication.

OSHA Hazard Communication Standard (HCS)

In order to begin implementing a hazard communication plan, it's critical to know OSHA standards on the topic. The HCS has adopted the provisions of the Globally Harmonized System (GHS).

Chemical manufacturers must:

- Determine a chemical's hazards
- Provide labels and Safety Data Sheets (SDS)

Employers must:

- Implement a hazard communication program
- Maintain SDS's
- Train on 16-section SDS, labels and pictograms

Employees must:

- Read labels and SDS's
- Follow employer instructions and warnings
- Identify hazards before starting a job
- Participate in training

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Helping Employees Protect Themselves

The goal of a proper hazard communication program is to ensure that employers and employees alike know about chemical hazards presented in their workplace — and more importantly, how to avoid those hazards on the job.

- All employers must have a hazard communication program in place.
- OSHA created the Hazard Communication Standard to help ensure employees' safety when working with hazardous chemicals.
- This program ensures that all employers receive the information they need to inform and train their employees properly and to design and put in place employee protection programs.
- Employees have a right to know about the hazardous chemicals they use on the job and how to work safely with those chemicals.



General Hazard Classifications

Under GHS chemicals will be classified using a harmonized system with standardized language for Health Hazard, Physical Hazard, and Environmental (not regulated by OSHA) categories.

- Health Hazards
 - Corrosive
 - Toxic
 - Carcinogen
 - Radioactive
- Physical Hazards
 - Explosive
 - Flammable liquid
 - Oxidizer/reactive
 - Gases under pressure

Acids

Proteinize upon contact with skin and causes immediate pain:

- Hydrochloric
- Sulfuric
- Nitric
- Perchloric
- Hydrofluoric acid

Bases

- Do not proteinize against the skin
- Do not cause immediate pain

Routes of entry

- Skin and eye contact
- Inhalation
- Swallowing
- Penetration (skin absorption)

Handling Hazardous Materials

Make Safety Data Sheets (SDS)

Available

Prepared by a chemical's manufacturer or importer to provide detailed information about the chemical's characteristics, these sheets point out potential hazards and methods for safe use, handling and storage of the material. They contain:

- Chemical and manufacturer identity
- Hazardous ingredients
- Physical and chemical characteristics
- Fire, explosion and reactivity
- Health hazards
- Exposure controls

Be Mindful of Safe Storage Practices

- Purchase only quantities that can be used in a reasonably short time.
- Limit amount kept in labs/work areas.
- Store according to chemical classification, not alphabetically.
- Store in closed cabinets.
- Store close to floor rather than above head level.
- If stored on open shelves, keep to rear rather than on front edge.
- Do not store inside hoods.
- Discard materials that are not being used.

Address Spills and Leaks

Immediately

- Evacuate the area.
- Notify a supervisor or the emergency response team.
- Remove ignition sources (if safe to do so).
- Stay away.

Be Prepared for First Aid and Emergency

The consequences of exposure can be deadly. Because of this, it's critical that every employer makes having a hazard communication program a priority.

Personal Protective Equipment

Many times, an employee's first line of defense is their personal protective equipment, or PPE. As such, it's important to use these tools, use them properly and enforce their use. Refer to SDS's or product labels for the proper PPE to utilize when handling certain chemicals.

First response suggestions

- Eyes should be flushed with water for 15 minutes.
- Skin needs to be washed with soap and water.
- Inhalation exposure should be countered with fresh air.
- Swallowing accidents should receive emergency medical assistance.

Emergency Procedures

- Do not pull building alarm
- Immediately go to a safe area and call the emergency number for your facility – be ready to provide:
 - Your name
 - Your phone number
 - Your location
 - Where the spill is located
 - What chemical spilled
 - When it was spilled
 - Effects of Exposure

The SDS will list the dosage, or exposure level, allowed for each hazardous chemical.

These exposure levels are typically called Permissible Exposure Level (PEL) as set by OSHA or Threshold Limit Value (TLV) as recommended by ACGIH (American Conference of Governmental Industrial Hygienists) and refer to the quantity of hazardous chemical that an average employee can safely be exposed to in an eight-hour work day.

Over exposure could cause severe or irreversible health risks.

Acute Effects

These are short-term effects or symptoms that disappear once the victim is no longer exposed to the chemical. They include rashes, burns, respiratory irritation, and poisoning.

Chronic Effects

These are long-term effects that develop over a long period of exposure. They include allergies, lung or liver damage, cancer, etc.

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Health Hazards

- Corrosives/oxidizers lead to injuries to tissue or skin
- Toxics/flammables/compressed gases damage the respiratory system
- Explosives can cause burns and when pressurized can fly through the air
- Radioactive materials cause radiation sickness and cancer
- Carcinogens cause cancer

External Symptoms of Exposure

- Redness
- Swelling
- Itching
- Pain

Internal Symptoms of Exposure

- Nausea
- Lightheadedness
- Headaches
- Difficulty breathing
- Heart palpitations

