

CONSTRUCTION

Safety education for provided by the insurance specialists at: Corkill Insurance Agency, Inc.

TARGET → ON SAFETY

Hazard Communication

Introduction

Chemical safety on the job site is very important to us. Although we work with potentially hazardous materials on a regular basis, we can maintain a safe working environment if we use chemicals as they were intended and follow necessary safety precautions. Our Hazard Communication program is designed to teach everyone how to safely handle and work with the chemicals we encounter every day.

Hazard Communication is designed to do just as the name suggests: communicate hazard information to each employee. You need to know what chemicals you are working with or exposed to, hazards associated with each chemical and how to protect yourself. This education is accomplished through a variety of

means, so we want to review our program with you today.

Hazard Determination

You may wonder who determines what is “hazardous” or not. The process of hazard determination is very scientific, is guided by strict federal requirements and has proven itself to be extremely reliable. The manufacturer of the hazardous material has the most information about their products and is required to provide this information to users of that material, like us. There are severe penalties for chemical manufacturers who do not provide complete or accurate information through their safety data sheets (SDS).

Hazardous Material Defined

Hazardous material is defined as items that have a physical or health hazard associated with them. For instance, flammable, combustible or explosive materials are physically hazardous. In the same sense, materials that are carcinogenic, toxic, corrosive and/or irritating are considered health hazards. This definition captures many of the materials that we may use on the job site, including:

- Dust from sawing, drilling or sanding
- Solvents, such as glue, paints and varnishes
- Formaldehyde exposure from working with particleboard
- Hazardous waste

The Chemical Inventory

We maintain a listing (inventory) of all the materials we work with that have physical or health hazards. This helps to ensure that we have all the necessary SDS. Our employees are an important factor in keeping the inventory current. Any time a new material is brought into the worksite, we need to make sure it is added to the chemical inventory if it has a physical or health hazard. If you bring a new material into your area, please make sure the site foreman knows about it so the chemical inventory can be updated.

Safety Data Sheets: The Most Important Documents

SDS are the most important documents we have concerning the chemicals used at our company. These are the documents the chemical manufacturer prepares to inform the end-users (you and me) about any hazards associated with a product. SDS are required to summarize certain information, including product identification, scientific information about ingredients, hazards associated with the product, incompatibilities, potential reactions, safe handling and storage, and spills guidelines.

The most important sections focus on first aid requirements and personal protective equipment. If

Why Is Hazard Communication So Important?

You need to know what chemicals you are working with or exposed to, hazards associated with each chemical and how to protect yourself.

you have never read an SDS, then that's something you need to do when you and the site foreman review the specific hazardous materials used in your job duties.

The site foreman will show you where all the SDS are located and will help you navigate through them. It is important for you to familiarize yourself with the SDS for any hazardous material you work with or may be exposed to, so that you can understand the risks and take precautions. In addition, you should understand the SDS so you know how to find information quickly when you need it, such as in the event of a spill or accident.

Labeling Requirements

Our first line of defense with any type of material is the label found on the product container. It is critically important that every container be labeled so it properly identifies the material inside.

Labels must include:

- **Product Identifier**—The chemical's name and a list of the substance(s) it contains.

- **Supplier Information**—Name, address and phone number of the chemical's manufacturer or supplier.
- **Pictogram**—A symbol inside a diamond with a red border, denoting a particular hazard class.
- **Precautionary Statement**—One or more phrases that describe recommended measures to be taken to minimize or prevent adverse effects resulting from exposure to a hazardous chemical or improper storage or handling of a hazardous chemical.
- **Signal words**—A single word used to indicate the relative level of severity of the hazard and alert the reader to a potential hazard on the label. The signal words used are "danger" and "warning." "Danger" is used for the more severe hazards, while "warning" is used for less severe hazards.

- **Hazard Statement**—A phrase assigned to each hazard category; examples include “harmful if swallowed,” “highly flammable liquid and vapor,” etc.

Manufacturers will make sure the primary container is labeled properly, and there is never a reason to remove a label from a primary container. However, we need to always make sure secondary containers are also labeled. For instance, if you pour some degreaser from its primary one-gallon container into smaller containers for easier use, you need to label the smaller containers (the secondary containers) with all the right information. Simply labeling the small containers as “degreaser” is not sufficient; more detail is necessary. The site foreman will help you with any labeling requirements.

Summary

Let’s all remember that the chemicals we work with have a potential for danger. Most materials you encounter are generally safe, but it’s important to know the possible hazards of any substance in order to maintain a safe working environment. Our hazard communication program is designed to keep you up to date on all the hazardous materials we have on-site, and how to use those materials safely.

When you have questions regarding materials, make sure you ask them before using the material. Never make assumptions about any chemical you are using and always remain properly and fully informed about the material. In order for our hazard communication program to be effective, you need to take responsibility for using the information provided in order to keep yourself and co-workers safe.