

# Understanding Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS)



Material safety data sheets (MSDSs) keep you informed about the chemicals you use and instruct you on how to use them safely. Your employer must have an available MSDS for each hazardous chemical you use.

A sample Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) form. The form is titled "Material Safety Data Sheet" and includes sections for: Section I - Identification, Section II - Hazardous Ingredients/Identity Information, Section III - Physical/Chemical Characteristics, and Section IV - Fire and Explosion Hazard Data. It also includes fields for emergency telephone numbers, date prepared, and other relevant information.

## An MSDS Must Include:

- ◆ the name of the chemical (as used on the label).
- ◆ all hazardous ingredients and their amounts.
- ◆ physical and chemical characteristics.
- ◆ reactivity and how to prevent a reaction.
- ◆ the chemical's flash point.
- ◆ control measures and how to protect yourself.
- ◆ health hazards.
- ◆ whether the chemical is carcinogenic (cancer-causing).
- ◆ precautions for safe handling and use.
- ◆ emergency and first aid procedures.
- ◆ date of preparation and latest revision.
- ◆ name, address and telephone number of the manufacturer, importer or other responsible party.

## Read the MSDS

Always read the MSDS before starting a job with a hazardous chemical. Practice by choosing a chemical that's used in your workplace and looking up its corresponding MSDS. Then use this quiz to familiarize yourself with the chemical and using an MSDS.

- ✓ **Chemical name**
- ✓ **What should you do if the chemical spills or leaks?**
- ✓ **What number would you call to get more information about the chemical?**
- ✓ **Is this chemical likely to be in liquid or gas form at room temperature?**
- ✓ **What hazardous ingredients are in the chemical?**
- ✓ **What protective equipment should you use around this chemical?**
- ✓ **What should you do if you get this chemical on your skin? In your eyes?**
- ✓ **How do you dispose of this chemical properly?**

## Right to Know

You have a right to know about the hazards of chemicals in the workplace and how to protect yourself. The Hazard Communication Standard developed by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration gives you that legal right. HazCom details what chemical manufacturers, employers and employees have to do to make sure that everyone who works around hazardous chemicals is aware of the specific hazards and necessary protection.