

# Safety Talks!

HANDOUT

Chemical Safety ■ T1708-01

## Hazard Communication (HAZCOM)

### WHAT'S AT STAKE

The chemicals you use at work can be hazardous to your health and safety. You need to be prepared so that you can protect yourself and your co-workers from injury or illness. Material safety data sheets (MSDSs) are prepared by the chemical manufacturer or importer so that you will know how to safely handle the chemicals you are using, what protective equipment you need to use and what steps to take if something does go wrong.

### WHAT'S THE DANGER

Exposure to the chemicals you use at work can cause injuries or can have toxic effects with a long-term impact on your health and even on your ability to work. In addition to health effects, many chemicals, like solvents, can cause fires or even explosions if not handled properly and in the right type of environment.

### EXAMPLE

Solvents are one type of chemical you may use in your job. The effects of solvents include irritation to the skin, eyes and respiratory tract. When inhaled, some solvents, such as toluene, can have neurotoxic effects, such as memory loss or motor impairment.

### HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

Read the MSDS for each chemical before you use it for the first time. Review it as needed. Your company will have written material safety data sheets on file. These MSDSs can also be accessed on the internet. Follow the directions for use,

handling and disposal of the chemicals. Make sure you are aware of what to do in case of a spill or other emergency.

### 1. THE HAZCOM PROGRAM

Your company should have a complete and comprehensive HAZCOM program. The program should be in writing and should include: a determination of the hazards present in your company, labeling of all chemical containers, training about the hazardous chemicals, an inventory of all of the hazardous chemicals, and material safety data sheets. The program should also cover tasks that involve chemicals, but that are not routine.

### 2. INFORMING EMPLOYEES

The employer must inform its employees of the hazards of the chemicals they use. This is done by training new employees or whenever new chemicals are brought in for use. Training should be repeated periodically. Other ways of informing employees about hazards include material safety data sheets and labeling of containers that hold chemicals.

### FINAL WORD

Your company's Hazard Communication Program (HAZCOM) can help you learn to use chemicals at work safely. Learn about the program and how to read and understand material safety data sheets and chemical labels. 🍁

## TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. You should know how to read a material safety data sheet.  
☐ True ☐ False
2. Using material safety data sheets can help prevent injury.  
☐ True ☐ False
3. Your company should have a written hazard communication program.  
☐ True ☐ False
4. As long as you know what's in the bottle, it doesn't need a label.  
☐ True ☐ False
5. Employees should be trained before they begin work with a new chemical.  
☐ True ☐ False

### What Would You Do?

You work in a plant that manufactures dolls. Your boss decides that he needs to make the dolls in a different way. To do this, he tells you he will be using a new chemical. What should you ask him? Would you immediately begin to use the new chemical?

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# Safety Talks!

FOR THE LEADER

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## BEFORE THE TALK

## 7 PREPARATION TIPS

- 1** Determine which employees are affected. Clerical workers, for example, need to know that a hazard communication program is in place, but since they do not use the chemicals directly, they may not need to know the details of the hazards associated with chemicals in use.
- 2** Review the requirements of OSHA's Hazard Communication Standard (or applicable Canadian law). Become familiar with the key elements of the standard, so that you can explain why this program is necessary and useful.
- 3** Review the inventory of hazardous chemicals in your facility. Be able to explain the hazards of chemicals to the employees who use them. If you have several chemicals of the same class, such as solvents or corrosives, explain the hazards of these materials by class.
- 4** Review the labels on the chemical containers in use in your facility. Be sure that they contain the proper information such as the name of the chemical, the generic name of the chemical, the hazards of the chemical and, if required, the target organ affected.
- 5** Make sure that you can tell your employees where they can readily find a copy of your company's written hazard communication program. Also, make sure they know how to find a material safety data sheet. If your material safety data sheets are online, make sure employees know how to access them this way, as well.
- 6** Use this training opportunity to reinforce the use of required personal protective equipment (PPE). Reinforce your company's policies about personal protective equipment, and let employees know about the next training session on the use of PPE.
- 7** Review your company's emergency procedures. Although you are trying to prevent injuries and incidents, you want your employees to be ready just in case the unexpected happens. Make sure they know how to locate emergency contact numbers, as well.

■ For information on a variety of safety topics, check out Bongarde's online network for safety professionals at <http://www.SafetyXChange.org>

■ If you want the latest in job safety news, tips, photos, health-related articles, fatality reports and audio talks, sign up for Safety Smart! Weekly Briefing at <http://www.SafetySmart.com>.

## AFTER THE TALK CHECKLIST

- Provided extra training to workers who did poorly on quiz  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_
- Observed workers  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_
- Refresher training  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_
- Other (describe)  
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Date: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

LOCATION: \_\_\_\_\_

MEETING CONDUCTED BY: \_\_\_\_\_

**MEETING WAS ATTENDED BY:** Each participant is to sign below, for record kept on file.

_____	_____	_____
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Answers to T1708-01 Quiz:

1.True 2. True 3.True 4. False 5. True