

PROPERTY MANAGEMENT

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What You Need to Know About Hazard Communication

Introduction

In your day-to-day job duties, you likely encounter a wide range of potentially hazardous chemicals and materials during routine property maintenance tasks. However, you can maintain a safe working environment for yourself and those around you if you simply understand the materials you're working with and take appropriate precautions.

Hazard Communication is designed to do just as the name suggests: communicate hazard information to our employees. Our program will teach you 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.

Hazardous Materials Defined

Hazardous material is defined as items that have a physical or health hazard associated with them. For instance, flammable, combustible, explosive or compressed gases are physically hazardous materials. In the same sense, materials that are carcinogenic, toxic, corrosive and/or irritating are considered health hazards. This definition captures many of the materials you may encounter on the job, which include cleaners, degreasers, paints, adhesives, solvents, lubricants, pesticides and many more.

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).

The Chemical Inventory

We maintain a listing (inventory) of all the materials that have physical or health hazards in our workplace. 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 company, 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 the workplace, please make sure your supervisor knows about it so the chemical inventory can be updated.

SDSs: The Most Important Documents

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

Your supervisor 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,

Don't Hesitate To Ask Questions

If you have a question about a certain material you will be using, do not hesitate to ask. Obtaining clarification can help prevent an accident from occurring, which will protect you and your co-workers.

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 the following:

- **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.
- **Pictograms**—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.

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 you may be exposed to, and how to use those materials safely. When you have questions regarding materials, make sure you ask them before using 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 others safe.

