Safety Data Sheet Meeting Kit



What's At Stake

The Safety Data Sheets (SDSs) are summary documents that provide information about the hazards of a product and advice about safety precautions. SDSs are usually written by the manufacturer or supplier of the product. In some circumstances, an employer may be required to prepare an SDS (e.g., when the product is produced and used exclusively in that workplace).

What's the Danger

THE CONTENTS OF SAFETY DATA SHEETS

OSHA has issued the new requirements for Safety Data Sheets should be available for all chemicals and substances and they're designed to provide workers and emergency personnel with proper procedures for handling a specific substance.

- Section 1, Identification
- Section 2, Hazard(s) identification
- Section 3, Composition/information on ingredients
- Section 4, First-aid measures
- Section 5, Fire-fighting measures
- Section 6, Accidental release measures
- Section 7, Handling and storage
- Section 8, Exposure controls/personal protection
- Section 9, Physical and chemical properties
- Section 10, Stability and reactivity
- Section 11, Toxicological information
- Section 12, Ecological information
- Section 13, Disposal considerations
- Section 14, Transport information
- Section 15, Regulatory information
- Section 16, Other information

HAZARDS OF SDSs INACCURATE/MISSING INFORMATION

30 to 100% of products analyzed contained chemicals not declared on an SDS. Some ingredients, such as those in fragrances, are exempt under patent laws regardless of toxicity. Furthermore, chemicals were also found at higher

concentrations than what the SDS listed. The consistent format on the new Safety Data Sheets do not assure that the information in the new format will be any more accurate.

Limitation of SDSs. SDSs are difficult for workers with limited English proficiency to understand, and there is no requirement to provide non-English speakers with information in their native language. However, per federal OSHA, it is your right to "receive workplace safety and health training in a language you understand." As a result, some employers may maintain copies in other languages, but this is not always the case.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

WORKER PROTECTION WITH SDS

Workers Need to Know That:

- Employers will be required to make sure that all hazardous products (as defined by the Hazardous Products Regulations) have an up to date SDS when it enters the workplace. The SDSs must be readily available to the workers who are exposed to the hazardous product, and to the health and safety committee or representative.
- Employers may computerize the SDS information as long as:
    - all employees have access to and are trained on how to use the computer or device,
    - the computers/devices are kept in working order, and
    - the employer makes a hard copy of the SDS available to the employee or health and safety committee/representative upon request.

What does "not available" or "not applicable" mean when workers see these on the SDS?

"Not available" means that the information could not be located or does not exist. For example, if the supplier cannot locate any studies that measure the odour threshold, which is reported in Section 9 of the SDS, the supplier would report "not available".

"Not applicable" means that the information element is not relevant. For example, if the product is odourless, then the odour threshold would be reported as "Not applicable".

What Workers Need to Do

- read the name of the chemical,
- understand safe handling and storage instructions, and
- understand what to do in an emergency.
- know the hazards,

Workers Need to Understand 4 Main Purposes Of SDSs

a. Identification: for the product and supplier.

b. Hazards: physical (fire and reactivity) and health.

c. Prevention: steps you can take to work safely, reduce, or prevent exposure,

or in an emergency.

d. Response: appropriate responses in various situations (e.g., first-aid, fire, accidental release).

KEY TRAINING QUESTIONS FOR WORKERS

Were employees trained on how to access and read a Safety Data Sheet? Have employees received hazard communication training? Did that training include information about SDSs? Were the SDSs provided in a language understood by the employee? If the answer is "yes", workers have been trained in effective SDS use.

FINAL THINGS WORKERS MUST KNOW

- Make sure that the product is being used in the way the manufacturer intended; otherwise, the advice provided on the SDS, and label may not apply, or the protective measures listed may not be adequate. Section 1 of the SDS should describe the typical use of the product and may indicate restrictions. Ask your supervisor or a health and safety professional for advice if the way you use the product does not match the SDS.
- Section 2 will summarize the hazards related to the product, precautions to take, and what to do in an emergency. Understand that the SDS covers information about the potential hazards but may not be specific about the required safe work procedures needed for your workplace (e.g., the SDS may not specify what type of respirator must be used, just that a respirator is needed). More information can be found by asking your supervisor. These decisions may require the help of a safety professional or someone with chemical safety knowledge.

FINAL WORD

Employers should provide employees with easy access to safety data sheets and communicate expectations that workers should refer to SDSs in the course of their workday.