

Understanding the Hazard Communication Standard (Right-to-Know)

Introduction

Hazard Communication helps workers understand hazardous chemicals through a written program, labels, safety data sheets (SDSs), and effective training. Information must match the actual chemicals and work.

Hazards & Controls

Know how to access the written program and SDSs during your shift. The employer maintains required chemical information and provides training at initial assignment and when a new chemical hazard is introduced. Ask for an explanation you understand before starting unfamiliar work.

Check product identity and hazards before use. Report missing information and do not guess at container contents. Coordinate chemical hazards with other employers on site and review nonroutine tasks through the site program.

Follow the product label, current SDS, and employer's task-specific chemical safety procedures. These awareness notes do not authorize chemical handling or emergency response or replace required training.

Safety Reminders

Verify the required controls before work and keep emergency access clear. Stop, withdraw safely, and report missing information, symptoms, leaks, or failed controls. Do not attempt a response beyond your training and authorization.

Engagement Questions

Where are our written program and SDSs, and who explains an unfamiliar hazard?

What site-specific hazards or changes would make us stop work?

Sources and use notice

OSHA: Hazard Communication (1910.1200)

OSHA: Hazard Communication Overview

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Meeting Record & Sign-In

Understanding the Hazard Communication Standard (Right-to-Know)

Company: _____ Date: _____

Jobsite: _____ Presenter: _____

Time / duration: _____ Crew / shift: _____

Site-specific hazards and controls discussed

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Follow-up action / responsible person / due date

Safety Data Sheets (SDS)

Introduction

An SDS has a standardized 16-section format. Match its product identifier to the label and use the current sheet to plan handling, exposure controls, first aid, and emergencies.

Hazards & Controls

Review sections 2 (hazards), 4 (first aid), 6 (accidental release), 7 (handling and storage), 8 (exposure controls and PPE), and 10 (stability and reactivity). Other sections may also be essential for the task. An SDS is a starting point, not a task-specific risk assessment.

SDSs must be readily accessible during each work shift. Electronic access must not create barriers to immediate access. Report missing or inconsistent information and have the employer resolve it with the supplier before the affected task proceeds.

Follow the product label, current SDS, and employer's task-specific chemical safety procedures. These awareness notes do not authorize chemical handling or emergency response or replace required training.

Safety Reminders

Verify the required controls before work and keep emergency access clear. Stop, withdraw safely, and report missing information, symptoms, leaks, or failed controls. Do not attempt a response beyond your training and authorization.

Engagement Questions

Can everyone on this shift promptly find the correct SDS for our product?

What site-specific hazards or changes would make us stop work?

Sources and use notice

OSHA: Hazard Communication (1910.1200)

OSHA: Safety Data Sheets Brief

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Meeting Record & Sign-In

Safety Data Sheets (SDS)

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Follow-up action / responsible person / due date

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Chemical Labeling and Pictograms

Introduction

Shipped-container labels communicate product identity, signal words, hazard and precautionary statements, pictograms, and supplier details as required. Pictograms are warnings to read further, not complete instructions.

Hazards & Controls

Learn the applicable symbols and read the whole label with the SDS. Workplace-container labels may use the full shipped-label elements or an allowed alternative that communicates the hazards through the workplace system; they do not always require every shipped-label element.

Keep required labels readable and do not deface incoming labels without immediately providing the required information. The immediate-use portable-container exception is narrow: it applies to the employee who made the transfer under the rule. Never assume it covers unattended or shared containers.

Follow the product label, current SDS, and employer's task-specific chemical safety procedures. These awareness notes do not authorize chemical handling or emergency response or replace required training.

Safety Reminders

Verify the required controls before work and keep emergency access clear. Stop, withdraw safely, and report missing information, symptoms, leaks, or failed controls. Do not attempt a response beyond your training and authorization.

Engagement Questions

What does our workplace label system tell us, and when must a transferred container be labeled?

What site-specific hazards or changes would make us stop work?

Sources and use notice

OSHA: Hazard Communication (1910.1200)

OSHA: Labels and Pictograms Brief

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Chemical Labeling and Pictograms

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Storage and Segregation of Chemicals

Introduction

Store chemicals by their actual compatibility and applicable storage requirements. A broad category or alphabetical order alone cannot establish safe segregation; some chemicals have several hazards.

Hazards & Controls

Use SDS sections 7 and 10 and the approved compatibility plan. Separate incompatible substances with suitable arrangements and compatible secondary containment. Protect containers from damage, heat, and unauthorized access, and keep labels readable.

Use storage cabinets and allowable quantities appropriate to the hazards. Do not assume every cabinet needs ventilation or modify cabinet vents yourself; have qualified personnel follow the manufacturer, applicable code, and site design. Do not store incompatible wastes together.

Follow the product label, current SDS, and employer's task-specific chemical safety procedures. These awareness notes do not authorize chemical handling or emergency response or replace required training.

Safety Reminders

Verify the required controls before work and keep emergency access clear. Stop, withdraw safely, and report missing information, symptoms, leaks, or failed controls. Do not attempt a response beyond your training and authorization.

Engagement Questions

Which products here are incompatible, and how does our storage layout keep them separated?

What site-specific hazards or changes would make us stop work?

Sources and use notice

OSHA: Hazard Communication (1910.1200)

NIH: Compatible Chemical Storage

CCOHS: Storage Safety Cabinets

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Handling Flammable and Corrosive Materials

Introduction

Flammables can produce ignitable vapors, while corrosives can injure tissue or damage equipment. A product may have both hazards; controls must address the material, quantity, task, and location.

Hazards & Controls

Use compatible approved containers and dispensing equipment, control ignition sources, and follow required bonding and grounding procedures for the transfer. Ventilation must be designed for the exposure and fire hazard; an ordinary fan may be unsuitable.

For splash hazards, use the selected chemical-resistant clothing and gloves, goggles, and any required face shield over eye protection. Confirm emergency washing facilities and spill arrangements before work. Never rely on a generic PPE list without checking compatibility.

Follow the product label, current SDS, and employer's task-specific chemical safety procedures. These awareness notes do not authorize chemical handling or emergency response or replace required training.

Safety Reminders

Verify the required controls before work and keep emergency access clear. Stop, withdraw safely, and report missing information, symptoms, leaks, or failed controls. Do not attempt a response beyond your training and authorization.

Engagement Questions

What transfer controls and splash protection are required for this particular material?

What site-specific hazards or changes would make us stop work?

Sources and use notice

OSHA: Hazard Communication (1910.1200)

OSHA: Flammable Liquids (1910.106)

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Follow-up action / responsible person / due date

Mixing Chemicals - What NOT to Do

Introduction

Combining products can release heat, pressure, or toxic gases. Do not mix chemicals unless an approved, task-specific procedure establishes the identities, compatibility, quantities, sequence, and controls.

Hazards & Controls

Never mix bleach with ammonia, acids, or other cleaners. Similar packaging, a familiar odor, or a small trial mixture does not prove compatibility. Do not combine waste streams or add chemicals to unknown residues.

Follow the approved procedure and supplier instructions exactly. Do not improvise dilution, neutralization, or an antidote to a reaction. If unexpected heat, gas, swelling, or fumes appear, withdraw, warn others, and summon the designated response team from a safe location.

Follow the product label, current SDS, and employer's task-specific chemical safety procedures. These awareness notes do not authorize chemical handling or emergency response or replace required training.

Safety Reminders

Verify the required controls before work and keep emergency access clear. Stop, withdraw safely, and report missing information, symptoms, leaks, or failed controls. Do not attempt a response beyond your training and authorization.

Engagement Questions

Who approves a mixture, and what will we do if a reaction starts unexpectedly?

What site-specific hazards or changes would make us stop work?

Sources and use notice

OSHA: Hazard Communication (1910.1200)

CDC: Safe Use of Bleach

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Mixing Chemicals - What NOT to Do

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Personal Protective Equipment for Chemical Work

Introduction

Select PPE from the employer hazard assessment and product-specific information. No single glove, suit, or respirator protects against every chemical, concentration, temperature, or task.

Hazards & Controls

Use manufacturer compatibility data, including permeation, breakthrough, degradation, and use limitations. Inspect, fit, replace, and remove PPE safely under the procedure. A glove can allow chemical passage without visible damage; appearance alone does not establish protection.

Use splash eye protection and additional face protection when required. Respirators require proper selection and the applicable respiratory protection program, including medical evaluation, training, and fit testing where required. Plan decontamination and prevent contamination of clean areas.

Follow the product label, current SDS, and employer's task-specific chemical safety procedures. These awareness notes do not authorize chemical handling or emergency response or replace required training.

Safety Reminders

Verify the required controls before work and keep emergency access clear. Stop, withdraw safely, and report missing information, symptoms, leaks, or failed controls. Do not attempt a response beyond your training and authorization.

Engagement Questions

How do we confirm this PPE is suitable, and when must it be changed?

What site-specific hazards or changes would make us stop work?

Sources and use notice

OSHA: Hazard Communication (1910.1200)

OSHA: Personal Protective Equipment Guide

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Chemical Inhalation and Exposure Prevention

Introduction

Vapors, gases, fumes, mists, and dusts can harm workers even without a strong smell or immediate symptoms. The employer must evaluate exposure and choose controls for the actual contaminants and process.

Hazards & Controls

Use substitution, enclosure, and effective local exhaust or other engineering controls where appropriate. Keep containers closed and verify ventilation works as intended. Do not direct contaminants toward coworkers or assume an open door or portable fan controls exposure.

Use only the selected respirator under the employer program. Particulate filters do not remove all gases or vapors; air-purifying respirators do not supply oxygen and are unsuitable for oxygen-deficient or IDLH conditions. Leave and report symptoms or control failures; never enter a hazardous atmosphere for an unplanned rescue.

Follow the product label, current SDS, and employer's task-specific chemical safety procedures. These awareness notes do not authorize chemical handling or emergency response or replace required training.

Safety Reminders

Verify the required controls before work and keep emergency access clear. Stop, withdraw safely, and report missing information, symptoms, leaks, or failed controls. Do not attempt a response beyond your training and authorization.

Engagement Questions

What contaminants are possible, and how do we verify our exposure controls work?

What site-specific hazards or changes would make us stop work?

Sources and use notice

OSHA: Hazard Communication (1910.1200)

OSHA: Respiratory Protection (1910.134)

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Chemical Inhalation and Exposure Prevention

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Follow-up action / responsible person / due date

Spill Response and Cleanup Procedures

Introduction

The safe response depends on the material, release conditions, worker capability, and site plan, not volume alone. Distinguish an incidental release from an emergency before attempting cleanup.

Hazards & Controls

From a safe position, alert others, report the release, and isolate or evacuate as directed. Unknown material, spreading vapors, fire risk, or uncontrolled exposure calls for the designated emergency response. Do not approach to identify a substance by smell or touch.

Only trained, authorized workers may handle an incidental spill within the approved procedure and available controls. Emergency response requires the applicable specialized training and arrangements. Use compatible absorbents and PPE, manage waste correctly, and never wash chemicals into drains or improvise neutralization.

Follow the product label, current SDS, and employer's task-specific chemical safety procedures. These awareness notes do not authorize chemical handling or emergency response or replace required training.

Safety Reminders

Verify the required controls before work and keep emergency access clear. Stop, withdraw safely, and report missing information, symptoms, leaks, or failed controls. Do not attempt a response beyond your training and authorization.

Engagement Questions

What conditions require evacuation and specialist responders instead of routine cleanup?

What site-specific hazards or changes would make us stop work?

Sources and use notice

OSHA: Hazard Communication (1910.1200)

OSHA: HAZWOPER and Emergency Releases (1910.120)

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First Aid for Chemical Contact

Introduction

Plan the product-specific first-aid response before handling chemicals. Know the eyewash, safety shower, alarm method, and how to obtain emergency medical advice without exposing a rescuer.

Hazards & Controls

For most eye or skin splashes, begin immediate copious water rinsing and remove contaminated clothing safely. General poison guidance calls for eye rinsing 15-20 minutes and skin rinsing at least 15 minutes; do not treat that as an automatic stopping point. Follow the SDS and medical directions; some chemicals need longer or specialized treatment.

For dry chemicals on skin, safely remove loose material as directed before irrigation; follow any known chemical-specific exception. Do not put neutralizers or solvents on the body. Move to fresh air only when safe and do not enter a contaminated area for rescue. Call emergency services for serious symptoms and obtain prompt medical advice; do not delay initial decontamination while searching for paperwork.

Follow the product label, current SDS, and employer's task-specific chemical safety procedures. These awareness notes do not authorize chemical handling or emergency response or replace required training.

Safety Reminders

Verify the required controls before work and keep emergency access clear. Stop, withdraw safely, and report missing information, symptoms, leaks, or failed controls. Do not attempt a response beyond your training and authorization.

Engagement Questions

What does this product SDS require, and how will we summon medical help while rinsing?

What site-specific hazards or changes would make us stop work?

Sources and use notice

OSHA: Hazard Communication (1910.1200)

Poison Control: First Aid for Poisonings

CDC/NIOSH: Chemical First-Aid Procedures

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