

Hazardous Communication

What's in a Safety Data Sheet

Safety Data Sheets or SDS (previously known as Material Safety Data Sheets or MSDS) contain essential information to preventing injury and illnesses. This information is required to be accessible to users of all potentially harmful chemicals and substances.

Having quick access to this information can make the difference of life or death in a serious exposure. Be familiar with the hazards you work with, how to prevent exposure and safely handle the hazards.

SDS sections are standardized. If you know what information is there, you can quickly jump to it.

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

All chemical labels are required to have pictograms, a signal word, hazard and precautionary statements, the product identifier and supplier identification if it can cause reactions, or be harmful to you, your surroundings, or the environment. Pictograms on labels are designed to alert users of the chemical hazards. There are two signal words in the Globally Harmonized System, or GHS: danger (higher hazard) and warning. These signal words are used to communicate the severity of hazards on both the label and the SDS. The hazard and precautionary statements are used to describe the nature of the hazard(s) and recommended measures to minimize or prevent adverse effects resulting from exposure.

Key takeaways:

- SDS are required to be accessible to users of all potentially harmful chemicals and substances.
- There are two signal words in the GHS: danger (highest hazards) and warning. These signal words are used to communicate the level of hazard on both the label and the SDS.
- The hazard and precautionary statements are used to describe the nature of the hazard(s) and recommended measures to minimize or prevent adverse effects resulting from exposure.

Take action (Complete one or more activities as a team)

- A. SCAVENGER HUNT: Inspect the workplace/jobsite for chemicals being used and then locate their SDS.
- B. TEAM DISCUSSION: Review the SDS for the chemicals used in your tasks. Locate the information sections about first aid for exposures and personal protective equipment (PPE) required for handling. What are possible hazardous reactions involving the chemical and conditions to avoid? What are routes of exposure and symptoms of exposure for the chemical under review?
- C. CROSS REFERENCE: Pull one SDS for a chemical. Using SDS information, confirm that it is stored in the proper manner. Is the correct PPE outlined on the SDS available and in use? Do company practices for disposal match instructions on the SDS?

