

Hazard Communication

Since 1987 OSHA has included in its Hazard Communication Standard businesses of all sizes in the United States. There are no minimum requirements for the number of employees that a business has to have to comply with this regulation. The Hazard Communication Standard is also known as the Right to Know regulations. (Community Right to Know regulations are discussed in Chapter 11.) Their relevance to businesses is that every employee has the right to know what hazardous chemicals are used and stored at the work site and what the potential risks of exposure to these chemicals are. For businesses to meet the Hazard Communication Standard, OSHA requires every business to prepare the following:

- A written Hazard Communication Plan. This plan must specify how the business will comply with the law and which employees have been assigned specific responsibilities.
- An inventory of every potentially hazardous material in the building.
- A current catalogue of Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDSs) for all hazardous materials in the building. This catalogue should be compiled at a single site in the building. MSDSs are generally supplied by the manufacturer of the product.
- Labels for all secondary containers. Secondary containers are those used to decant hazardous materials for direct use. For example, isopropyl alcohol is usually supplied in large glass containers but used from handy-sized plastic containers. The plastic containers are the secondary containers that must be labeled. (The original container most likely comes labeled from the manufacturer or supplier.)
- A means of ensuring that all employees know the ECP, the evacuation plan, where the list of MSDSs is located, and how to use it.

A Hazard Communication Plan should contain the following information:

- How hazardous materials are identified
- Who is responsible for making warning labels, labeling hazardous materials, and notifying all persons in the building about the materials and their potential hazards
- A description of the labeling system for containers and warning signs (these are often standardized pictures)
- Where the inventory and list of MSDSs are kept and how these are updated
- A description of the training program.

An example of an MSDS is given in Fig. 13-2. All MSDSs should contain the following information:

- Chemical identification and product name
- Manufacturer name, address, and telephone number
- Hazardous ingredients
- Physical data (appearance and odor)
- Fire and explosive data (temperature at which substance will ignite or explode and how to extinguish it)
- Reactivity data (a list of conditions for materials that when mixed with the substance will cause a reaction)
- Emergency and cleanup procedures
- Protective equipment to use when handling the substance
- Special precautions.

IN THE EVENT OF CHEMICAL SPILLS

Chemical spilled	Who to notify	Which absorbent to use	Should this spill be disposed as hazardous waste?	Which protective equipment should be used when handling

FIG. 13-3 Form that can be used to deal with chemical spills in practices and shelters.