

# HOW DO I READ A MATERIAL SAFETY DATA SHEET (MSDS)?

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## What is a Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS)?



A Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) is a document that gives detailed information about the nature of a chemical, such as physical and chemical properties, health, safety, fire, and environmental hazards of a chemical product.



## How can a Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) protect you?

In addition to giving information about the nature of a chemical, an MSDS also tells how to work safely with a chemical and what to do if there is an accidental spill.

## Who is responsible for issuing a Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS)?

The Federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) Hazard Communication Standard (29 CFR 1910.1200) requires manufacturers or distributors of chemicals to issue Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDSs) with the first shipment of any hazardous chemical product, and the employer is responsible for having them available for you.

## For whom are Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDSs)?



They are designed for:

- workers who may be exposed to hazardous materials
- emergency personnel (for example, firefighters), who may have to clean up a spill or release.



## What information is required on a Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS)?

MSDSs must contain the same basic kinds of information, such as

- **Chemical Identity:** Name of the product.
- **Manufacturer's Information:** Name, address, phone number and emergency phone number of the manufacturer.
- **Hazardous Ingredients/Identity Information:** List of hazardous chemicals. Depending on the state, the list may contain all chemicals even if they are not hazardous, or only those chemicals which have OSHA standards. Since chemicals are often known by different names, all common (trade) names should be listed. The OSHA Permissible Exposure Limit (PEL) for each hazardous ingredient must be listed.

## MATERIAL SAFETY DATA SHEET (MSDS)

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### What information is required on a Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS)? *Continued*

- **Physical/Chemical Characteristics:** Boiling point, vapor pressure and density, melting point, evaporation rate, etc.
- **Fire and Explosion Hazard Data:** Flash point, flammability limits, ways to extinguish, special firefighting procedures, unusual fire and explosion hazards.
- **Reactivity Data:** How certain materials react with others when mixed or stored together.
- **Health Hazard Data:** Health effects (acute= immediate; chronic= long-term), ways the hazard can enter the body (lungs, skin or mouth), symptoms of exposure, emergency and first aid procedures.
- **Precautions of Safe Handling and Use:** What to do in case materials spill or leak, how to dispose of waste safely, how to handle and store materials in a safe manner.
- **Control Measures:** Ventilation (local, general, etc.), type of respirator/filter to use, protective gloves, clothing and equipment, etc.

### Where can I get Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDSs)?

- At your workplace: All workers must have easy access to them.
- The employer must request them from the distributor that sold the materials; workers can also request them.
- The Internet offers free resources and information on MSDSs, as well.
- Your union may have MSDSs also.



### If you need more information:



Call your state OSHA (if applicable) or Federal OSHA. If the MSDS information is not accurate, Federal OSHA can ask the manufacturers to revise their data sheets.

Call NIOSH, toll-free at (800) 356-4674 for information about chemical identities and health effects.



Or contact your union.