

What You Need to Know About Material Safety Data Sheets

What is a Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS)?

A Material Safety Data Sheet is designed to provide both workers and emergency personnel with the proper procedures for handling or working with a particular chemical. MSDS's include information such as physical data ([melting point](#), [boiling point](#), [flash point](#) etc.), [toxicity](#), health effects, first aid, reactivity, storage, disposal, spill/leak procedures and [protective equipment](#) to be used for spills and accidents.

Who should use MSDS's?

MSDS's are meant for:

- a. Employees who may be occupationally exposed to a [hazard](#) at work;
- b. Employers who need to know the proper methods for storage, etc.; and
- c. Emergency responders such as fire fighters, hazardous material crews, emergency medical technicians and emergency room personnel.

MSDSs are not meant for consumers. A MSDS reflects the hazards of working with the material in an occupational fashion. For example, a MSDS for paint is not highly pertinent to someone who uses a can of paint once a year but is extremely important to someone who does this in a confined space 40-hours a week. Exempted materials such as food, drugs, and cosmetics brought into the workplace for employee consumption and substances, like rubbing alcohol in the first aid kit would not be covered.

MSDS's have 16 sections under the American National Standard Institute MSDS standard:

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Substance identity and company contact information 2. Chemical composition and data on components 3. Hazards identification 4. First aid measures 5. Fire-fighting measures 6. Accidental release measures 7. Handling and storage 8. Exposure controls and personal protection | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 9. Physical and chemical properties 10. Stability and reactivity 11. Toxicological information 12. Ecological information 13. Disposal considerations 14. Transport information 15. Regulations 16. Other information |
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Hazardous communication does not require employers to maintain records of employee training, but training records may help you monitor your program to ensure employees are appropriately trained.

Occupational Safety and Health Administration has a pamphlet entitled "Chemical Hazard Communication," which can be found [online](#), obtained from your local OSHA area office or by contacting the OSHA Publications Office at (202) 523-9667.