



Getting Started in Safety

HAZARD COMMUNICATION PROGRAM

Why is the Hazard Communication program necessary?

Chemical exposure may cause or contribute to many serious health effects. Some chemicals may also be safety hazards and have the potential to cause fires and explosions and other serious accidents.

The Hazard Communication Standard (HCS) establishes uniform requirements to make sure that the hazards of all chemicals imported into, produced, or used in workplaces are evaluated, and that this hazard information is transmitted to affected employers and exposed employees.

In general it works like this:

- Chemical Manufacturers/Importers determine the hazards of each product.
- Chemical Manufacturers/Importers/Distributors communicate the hazard information and associated measures downstream to customers through labels and Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS's).
- Employers: Identify and list hazardous chemicals in their workplaces; obtain MSDS's and labels for each hazardous chemical; develop and implement a written hazard communication program, including labels, MSDS's, and employee training, based on the list of chemicals, MSDS's and label information; and communicate hazard information to their employees through labels, MSDS's, and formal training programs.

What does a written Hazard Communication program contain?

Employers must develop, implement, and maintain at the workplace a written comprehensive hazard communication program that includes provisions for a:

- List of hazardous chemicals in each work area.
- Method to ensure container labeling and legibility.
- Collection and availability of MSDS's.
- Employee training program.
- Designation of person(s) responsible to ensure MSDS's, labels, training and other aspects of the written hazard communication program are carried out.
- Methods the employer will use to inform employees of non-routine tasks (for example, the cleaning of reactor vessels).
- Methods the employer will use to inform employees of hazards associated with chemicals in unlabeled pipes.
- If the workplace has multiple employers on-site (for example, a construction site), the rule requires these employers ensure that information regarding hazards and protective measures be made available to the other employers on-site, where appropriate.

The written program does not have to be lengthy or complicated but must be made available to employees, their designated representatives, and OSHA.

What training is needed to protect workers?

Employers must establish a training and information program for employees exposed to hazardous chemicals in their work area, at the time of initial assignment, and whenever a new hazard is introduced into their work area. At a minimum, information discussion topics must include the following:

- The requirements of the hazard communication standard.
- The components of the hazard communication program in the employee's workplace(s).
- Operations in work areas where hazardous chemicals are present.
- Where the employer will keep the written hazard communications program, lists of hazardous chemicals, and the required MSDS forms.
- How the hazard communication program is implemented in the workplace, how to read and interpret information on labels and the MSDS, and how employees can use the available hazard information.
- The physical and health hazards of the chemicals in the work area. (The hazards may be discussed by individual chemical or by hazard categories such as flammability.)
- Measures that employees can take to protect themselves from the hazards.
- Specific procedures put into effect by the employer to provide protection such as engineering controls, work practices, and the use of personal protective equipment (PPE).
- Methods and observations, such as monitoring methods or visual appearance and/or odor, that workers can use to detect the presence of a hazardous chemical to which they may be exposed.

Right-To-Know:

The HCS provides workers the right-to-know the hazards and identities of the chemicals they are exposed to in the workplace. When workers have this information, they can effectively participate in their employers' protective programs and take steps to protect themselves.

DISCLAIMER

Material found here is based on the standards of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), the Nevada Revised Statutes, and/or the Nevada Administrative Code. However, it is not a substitute for the safety and health standards for General Industry (29 CFR Part 1910), or Construction (29 CFR Part 1926).

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