



# AMERICAN SUBCONTRACTORS ASSOCIATION HOUSTON CHAPTER

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## ACCESSING SAFETY KNOWLEDGE (ASK) SHEET: HAZARD COMMUNICATION

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OSHA's Hazard Communication Standard (HCS) is based on a simple concept—your employees have both a need and a right to know the identities and hazards of the chemicals they are exposed to at work. They also need to know what protective measures are available to prevent adverse effects from occurring. OSHA designed the HCS to help you provide your employees with this information. When you have proper information about the chemicals that your employees use, you can take steps to reduce exposures, substitute less hazardous materials, and establish proper work practices. These efforts will help prevent the occurrence of work-related illnesses and injuries caused by chemicals.

### **Chemical Hazard Evaluation**

Chemical manufacturers and importers must evaluate chemicals and report hazard information "downstream" to your company. The reporting methods they use are labels on containers and material safety data sheets (MSDSs). Each chemical must be evaluated for its potential to cause adverse health effects and its potential to pose physical hazards such as flammability. As an employer, you do not have to evaluate chemicals unless you choose to do so.

### **Employer Responsibility**

As an employer, you must implement a hazard communication program designed to get information provided by manufacturers and importers to your employees. You must:

- Obtain MSDSs and labels for each hazardous chemical your employees use.
- Identify and list the hazardous chemicals in your workplace.
- Design and put into place employee protection programs.
- Develop and implement an effective written hazard communication program. The program must include provisions for container labeling, and collecting and ensuring MSDSs are available to your employees.
- Establish a training and information program.
- Ensure your employees have access to MSDSs and your complete program.

### **Written Program**

You must develop, implement, and maintain at each workplace, a written hazard communication program which has the following elements: (1) container labeling and other forms of warning requirements, (2) MSDS preparation, (3) employee information and training methods, (4) chemical lists, (5) multi-employer workplace procedures, and (6) nonroutine task and unlabeled pipe hazard notification procedures.

### **Material Safety Data Sheets**

You must have a MSDS in the workplace for each hazardous chemical that your employees use. MSDSs must be in English and include: (1) specific chemical identity and common names, (2) the chemical's physical and chemical characteristics, (3) potential acute and chronic health effects and related health information, (4) whether the chemical is considered to be a carcinogen, (5) exposure limits, (6) recommendations for appropriate protective measures, and (7) emergency and first aid procedures.

### **Labels and Other Forms of Warning**

You must ensure that each container of hazardous chemicals in your workplace is labeled, tagged, or marked with: (1) the identity of the chemical, (2) appropriate physical and health warnings for the chemical, and (3) the name and address of the chemical manufacturer, importer, or other responsible party.

The chemical name on the label must match: (1) the name on the chemical's MSDS sheet, and (2) the name on your list of hazardous chemicals. The labels must be readable and in English.

### **Training Tips**

Have samples of labels used at your company. Point out the elements required on labels.

Bring in a sample MSDS and the corresponding chemical container with label. Point out that the chemical name must match. Also point out that the label contains very little information as compared to the MSDS. Contact the manufacturer to obtain MSDS information.