Chemical safety toolbox talk: handling chemicals safely

29 CFR 1910.1200, 1910.138, 1910.151, 1926.21, 1910.132, 1910.133

Date _____ Trainer _____ Location _____

Opening question

Which chemicals did you handle this week, and do you know what each one can do to you?

Why it matters

Fuel, solvents, paint, cleaners, cement and pesticides are all chemicals, and they come as liquids, solids, dusts and gases. Some burn skin or eyes, some catch fire easily, and some cause harm you do not feel until later. Chemicals get into the body when you breathe them, swallow them, or get them on your skin or in your eyes.

Key points

1. **Read the label every time**
   Labels on shipped containers must show the product identifier, a signal word, hazard statements, pictograms, precautionary statements and contact details for the manufacturer, importer or other responsible party. “Danger” is the signal word for the more severe hazards and “Warning” for the less severe (29 CFR 1910.1200(c)). Pictograms show the hazard at a glance, like a flame for chemicals that catch fire. No label, no use: find out what it is first.
   29 CFR 1910.1200(f)(1)

2. **Know where the safety data sheets are**
   Your employer must keep a safety data sheet (SDS) for each hazardous chemical and make sure it is readily accessible in your work area during each work shift. Every SDS uses the same numbered sections in the same order (29 CFR 1910.1200(g)(2)): section 4 is first aid, section 7 handling and storage, and section 8 exposure controls and personal protection. Find the SDS binder or app before you need it.
   29 CFR 1910.1200(g)(8)

3 Wear the PPE the job calls for

Employers must make sure workers use appropriate eye or face protection when exposed to eye or face hazards from liquid chemicals, acids or caustic liquids, or chemical gases or vapors (29 CFR 1910.133(a)(1) and 1926.102(a)(1)). In general industry, employers must also select and require appropriate hand protection against hazards such as skin absorption of harmful substances and chemical burns. No glove stops every chemical, so check the SDS for the right one, and use goggles, not just safety glasses, against splashes.

29 CFR 1910.138(a)

4 Label it, close it, store it right

If you pour a chemical from a labeled container into another one, label the new one too, unless it is only for your own immediate use: it stays under your control, only you use it, and only during that shift (29 CFR 1910.1200(c)). Never put chemicals in drink bottles. Keep lids closed, store chemicals away from heat and from products they react with, and never mix products unless the instructions say to.

29 CFR 1910.1200(f)(8)

5 Know what to do when it spills or splashes

Where your eyes or body could be exposed to injurious corrosive materials, there must be facilities for quick drenching or flushing within the work area for immediate emergency use, in construction too (29 CFR 1926.50(g)). If a chemical gets in your eyes or on your skin, flush right away and have someone call for help. For a spill, warn others, stay back if you do not know what it is, and follow the SDS.

29 CFR 1910.151(c)

6 Wash up before you eat

Wash your hands before you eat, drink or smoke, and keep food and drinks away from chemical work. In construction, workers required to handle or use poisons, caustics and other harmful substances must be instructed in safe handling and use and made aware of the potential hazards, personal hygiene and personal protective measures required. If a new product shows up, ask about it before you use it.

29 CFR 1926.21(b)(3)

Scenario

Picture this: At the end of a shift, a worker grabs an unlabeled spray bottle from the truck to clean some tools. It smells like the usual degreaser, so the worker skips the gloves and goggles. The spray drifts back, and the worker's eyes start to burn. The eyewash is behind a stack of pallets. What went wrong, and what should the crew do right now?

Crew discussion

1. Which chemicals do we use on this job, and where are their safety data sheets?
2. Which products here call for goggles, a face shield or chemical gloves?
3. Where is the nearest eyewash, and is the path to it clear?
4. What do we do if a chemical spills or gets on someone?

Bottom line

Read the label and SDS first, wear the PPE they call for, keep containers labeled and closed, and know where to flush.

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Sign-in sheet / Hoja de asistencia

Topic / Tema Chemical handling / Manejo de químicos

Date / Fecha _____

Trainer / Instructor _____

Location / Lugar _____

Company / Empresa _____

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