Hazard communication toolbox talk (HazCom)

29 CFR 1910.1200, 1926.59

Date _____ Trainer _____ Location _____

Opening question

If you found a container on this job with no label, how would you find out what is in it?

Why it matters

Hazardous chemicals are part of everyday work: fuel, solvents, paint, cleaners, cement and more. Hazard communication, or HazCom, is the system that tells you what those hazards are and how to protect yourself, through labels, safety data sheets and training. Without it, people get hurt by chemicals they did not know were dangerous.

Key points

1 **Your employer's written HazCom program**

Your employer must develop, implement and maintain a written hazard communication program at each workplace. It lists the hazardous chemicals present and explains how labels, safety data sheets and training are handled, and how workers learn about the hazards of non-routine tasks. You must be told where the program, the chemical list and the safety data sheets are kept (29 CFR 1910.1200(h)(2)(iii)).

29 CFR 1910.1200(e)(1)

2 **Read the whole label**

Shipped containers of hazardous chemicals must be labeled with the product identifier, a signal word, hazard statements, pictograms, precautionary statements and contact details for the manufacturer, importer or other responsible party. “Danger” is used for the more severe hazards and “Warning” for the less severe, and hazard statements describe the nature of the hazard (29 CFR 1910.1200(c)). Precautionary statements describe how to prevent harm from exposure or from improper storage or handling, so read them before you open the container.

29 CFR 1910.1200(f)(1)

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3 Learn the pictograms

OSHA's standard designates eight pictograms. On shipped containers, each one is a black symbol on a white background with a red diamond border. A flame means the product can catch fire, the corrosion symbol means it can burn skin and eyes or eat through metal, and the skull and crossbones means a single exposure can be toxic or deadly. One product can carry several, so read them all.

29 CFR 1910.1200(c)

4 Use the safety data sheet

There must be a safety data sheet (SDS) for each hazardous chemical, readily accessible in your work area during each work shift (29 CFR 1910.1200(g)(8)). Every SDS has 16 sections in the same order: section 2 lists the hazards, section 4 first aid, section 7 handling and storage, and section 8 exposure controls and personal protection. If you cannot find the SDS, ask before you use the product.

29 CFR 1910.1200(g)(2)

5 Label the containers you fill

Workplace containers of hazardous chemicals, including jugs and spray bottles filled on site, must be labeled, tagged or marked, with a few exceptions. One is a portable container filled from a labeled container for the immediate use of the person who filled it (29 CFR 1910.1200(f)(6) and (f)(8)). Workplace labels must be legible, in English, and prominently displayed on the container or readily available in the work area. Employers may add another language, such as Spanish, if the information is also in English.

29 CFR 1910.1200(f)(10)

6 Training and the 2026 deadline

Your employer must give you effective information and training on the hazardous chemicals in your work area when first assigned and whenever a new chemical hazard you have not been trained on is introduced (29 CFR 1910.1200(h)(1)). Training covers at least how to detect a release, the hazards, how to protect yourself, and the details of your employer's program, including labels and safety data sheets. Under the updated standard, employers must, as necessary, give additional training on newly identified hazards of substances no later than November 20, 2026 (29 CFR 1910.1200(j)(2)(ii)).

29 CFR 1910.1200(h)(3)

Scenario

Picture this: A painting crew starts work in a building where another contractor stores its supplies. One painter finds an unlabeled bucket with a strong smell and uses it to thin paint, thinking it is solvent. Soon the crew feels dizzy, and one worker's arms break out in a rash. Nobody knows what was in it or where the other contractor's safety data sheets are. What should have happened first?

Crew discussion

1. Where are our written program, chemical list and safety data sheets kept?
2. Which pictograms are on the products we use here, and what do they mean?
3. What do you do if you find a container with no label?
4. Who do you tell when a new chemical shows up on site?

Bottom line

No label, no use: read the label and the SDS, know the pictograms, and ask before you use any chemical you do not know.

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Sign-in sheet / Hoja de asistencia

Topic / Tema: Hazard communication (HazCom) / Comunicación de peligros (HazCom)

Date / Fecha: _____

Trainer / Instructor: _____ Location / Lugar: _____ Company / Empresa: _____

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