Safety data sheets toolbox talk: how to read and use an SDS

29 CFR 1910.1200

Date _____ Trainer _____ Location _____

Opening question

If a coworker got a chemical splash in the eye right now, could you find the safety data sheet right away?

Why it matters

Cleaners, paints, solvents, fuels and adhesives can burn, poison or catch fire. A safety data sheet (SDS) tells you the hazards of a chemical and how to protect yourself. It also tells you what to do if something goes wrong. It only helps if you know where it is and how to read it.

Key points

1. **Every hazardous chemical has an SDS**
   Employers must have a safety data sheet in the workplace for each hazardous chemical they use (29 CFR 1910.1200(g)(1)). SDS is the current name for what many people still call an MSDS. If you bring a new product to the job, make sure the SDS comes with it, and tell your supervisor.
   29 CFR 1910.1200(g)(1)

2. **You must be able to get to it**
   The employer must keep copies of the safety data sheets in the workplace and make sure they are readily accessible during each work shift to employees in their work areas (29 CFR 1910.1200(g)(8)). Electronic access is allowed as long as there are no barriers to immediate access. Know where the binder or the tablet is, and how to use it.
   29 CFR 1910.1200(g)(8)

3. **Know the 16 sections**
   An SDS uses a set format with 16 numbered sections (29 CFR 1910.1200(g)(2)). Learn the ones you need most: Section 1 identification, Section 2 hazards, Section 4 first aid, Section 5 fire fighting, Section 6 spills, Section 7 handling and storage, and Section 8 exposure controls and personal protective equipment.
   29 CFR 1910.1200(g)(2)

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4 Labels tell you the quick story

Each container of hazardous chemicals in the workplace must be labeled, tagged or marked (29 CFR 1910.1200(f)(6)). Look at the product name, the signal word, the hazard statements and the pictograms. Labels on incoming containers must not be removed or defaced unless the container is immediately marked with the required information (29 CFR 1910.1200(f)(9)). If a label is missing, do not use the product. Ask first.

29 CFR 1910.1200(f)(6)

5 Training is part of the deal

Employers must give employees effective information and training on hazardous chemicals in their work area at the time of their initial assignment and whenever a new chemical hazard is introduced (29 CFR 1910.1200(h)(1)). Training must include how to read an SDS, including the order of information and how employees can obtain and use the hazard information (29 CFR 1910.1200(h)(3)(iv)).

29 CFR 1910.1200(h)(1)

6 Use it before you start and in an emergency

Read the SDS before you use a new product. Check the personal protective equipment, the ventilation and what not to mix it with. In an emergency, go to Section 4 for first aid and Section 6 for spills, and tell responders the product name. If you work at more than one site, the SDS may be kept at the main workplace, but you must be able to get the information immediately in an emergency (29 CFR 1910.1200(g)(9)).

Scenario

Picture this: A maintenance worker is told to clean a floor drain. He grabs an unlabeled spray bottle from a shelf and sprays it. Soon his eyes burn and he starts coughing. His coworker runs to find the safety data sheet, but nobody knows which product it was or where the binder is kept. What should have been in place to avoid this?

Crew discussion

1. Where are the safety data sheets kept on this site, and how do we get to them?
2. What chemicals do we use, and which ones have you read the SDS for?
3. What would you do if a container had no label?
4. Which SDS section would you check first if someone was splashed?

Bottom line **Know where the SDS is, read it before you use a new chemical and never use an unlabeled container.**

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Sign-in sheet / Hoja de asistencia

Topic / Tema: Safety data sheets (SDS) / Hojas de datos de seguridad (SDS)

Date / Fecha: _____

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

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