Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) >

This information bulletin provides general information on Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS). A Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) is a document that describes the properties and uses of a substance, that is it identifies chemical and physical properties, health hazard information, precautions for use and safe handling information.

Purpose of a MSDS

MSDSs are produced by the manufacturers or importers of hazardous substances, to provide the user and/or handler of the substance with information to minimize any health risk while using the substance.

This information can be used to:

- Check that all products are being used in the right way for the right job;
- Decide whether any improvements should be made to machinery or procedures;
- Decide whether any air monitoring should be done during on-the-job training;
- Check that emergency equipment and procedures are adequate.

Information contained on a MSDS:

A MSDS has information on using and storing hazardous substances safely. The following is an example of the type of information you can expect to find in them:

Identification

- Product Name – name of the product and any identification codes;
- Other Names – used by the manufacturer or supplier
- Manufacturer's Code
- UN Number – some hazardous substances may also be classified as Dangerous Goods or Poisons;
- Dangerous Goods class and Subsidiary Risk;
- Hazchem Code – fire fighting procedures;
- Poisons Schedule;
- Use – common uses of the product.

Physical description and properties:

- Appearance;
- Boiling Point/Melting Point;
- Vapor Pressure;
- Specific Gravity – data on specific properties of the product;
- Flash Point;
- Flammability Limits;
- Solubility in Water;
- Other Properties.

Ingredients:

- Chemical Entity – precise chemical name of each ingredient, the CAS number which precisely identifies each ingredient, and the exact proportion of each ingredient in the product;
- CAS Number;
- Proportion.

Health hazard information

Health Effects: health hazards of short-term and long –term exposure to the product

- Acute (short term);
- Swallowed;
- Eye;
- Inhaled.

First Aid

Instructions and a list of any first-aid facilities required in work places using the product

- Swallowed;
- Eye;
- Skin;
- Inhaled;
- First-Aid Facilities;
- Advice to Doctor.

Precautions for use

- Exposure Standards – These standards are airborne concentrations of individual substances, which should neither impair the health of, or cause undue discomfort to nearly all workers;
- Engineering Controls – These can be segregation of processes, enclosure of the source of substances, mechanical handling to reduce human contact, local exhaust ventilation;
- Personal Protection – Specific type of protective clothing and equipment that is required, including respiratory, skin and eye protection;
- Flammability – Precautions that must be taken to avoid fires and explosions.

Safe handling information

- Storage and Transport – Safe transport and storage requirements;
- Spills and Disposal – preferred methods of disposal, methods to avoid and suitable materials to absorb spills;
- Fire/Explosion Hazards – Description of fire and explosion hazards, eg, dangerous decomposition products and information for fire fighting and emergency services, (type of extinguishers and protective equipment).

Other MSDS information

The MSDS should also include information such as hazards to the environment. The contact number and job title of the person to contact for more information about the substance should also be included.

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