

Hazardous Substances – **General**

08.01.07

Information employers must provide >

This is one of a series of information bulletins, which have been written to assist the employer to manage risks associated with hazardous substances. The bulletins make up a package, which reflects the Australian Safety and Compensation Council's ([ASCC](#)) approach to managing workplace hazardous substances, which is currently being adopted throughout Australia.

Information employers must obtain

Employers must obtain information about health effects of hazardous substances and the precautions needed to protect workers' health and safety. This information will be needed for:

- instructing and training employees about health hazards, safe use and handling of hazardous substances;
- assessing risks to health from work with hazardous substances; and
- making decisions about appropriate control measures to prevent or minimise exposure to hazardous substances.

Hazardous substances obtained from a supplier

For hazardous substances obtained from a supplier, basic health and safety information should be provided on the label.

A Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) must also be provided by the suppliers (except a retailer), for any hazardous substance that is for use at work. This must be done the first time a hazardous substance is supplied or if requested at any time. The employer must ensure that the MSDS is obtained from the supplier on or before the hazardous substance is first supplied to the workplace.

The MSDS should identify the hazardous substance and its recommended uses, health hazard information and precautions when using, handling and storing the hazardous substance. The MSDS should be written according to the ASCC [National Code of Practice for the Preparation of Material Safety Data Sheets 2nd Edition \[NOHSC:2011\(2003\)\]](#)

Hazardous substances purchased by or from a retailer

Retailers are not required to distribute MSDS under the [Workplace Health and Safety Regulations](#). Therefore, if a hazardous substance is purchased from a retailer, and the substance is for use at work, an MSDS can be requested from the manufacturer of the hazardous substance, (the information on how to contact the manufacturer will be on the label).

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Also, retailers and warehouse operators are not required to obtain an MSDS from the supplier, for consumer packages that are intended for retail sale, which are unopened on their premises, and which hold less than 30kg or 30 litres. However, they can request an MSDS from the supplier if they want information to assist them to plan their emergency procedures for accidental leaks or spills from a damaged container.

Hazardous substances produced at the workplace

For substances produced within the workplace (emissions or by-products), that don't have an MSDS, the employer will need to obtain information (similar to that found in an MSDS, relating to precautions for use and handling and health hazards).

Information employers must provide

Labels on containers

Employers must ensure that all containers of hazardous substances used or produced in the workplace are labeled according to the National Code of Practice for the Labeling of Workplace Substances [[NOHSC: 2012 \(1994\)](#)]

If hazardous substances are decanted into another container, the new container must be labeled appropriately, (even if the substance is to be used immediately).

If a container is not labeled, and the substance in the container is not known, the container should be labeled 'Caution do not use: unknown substance'. It should be stored until either it can be identified and labeled, or disposed of following directions from NT WorkSafe.

Identifying the contents of pipes and other enclosed systems -

Enclosed systems, including pipes and vessels, containing hazardous systems, must be identified and colour coded according to the [Australian Standard](#) 1345 - Identification of the Contents of Piping, Conduits and Ducts.

Access to MSDS and the hazardous substances register -

The employer must establish a Hazardous Substances Register (which includes the MSDS) and ensure it is available to all employees. The Register should list all hazardous substances used or produced in the workplace. NT WorkSafe bulletin [08.01.01](#) Hazardous Substances - What are they? provides advice on identifying hazardous substances in the workplace.

Retailers and retail warehouse operators do not have to set up a Hazardous Substances Register for unopened consumer packages that are intended for retail sale, and which hold less than 30kg or 30 litres.

Induction and training

Employers must provide induction and training to employees who could be exposed to hazardous substances. This must include advice about health hazards, precautions for safe use and how to access further information, ie. from MSDS and labels about hazardous substances.

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