

## **Right-To-Know Program**



*OSHA's Hazardous Communication Standard (Right-to-Know Law) stipulates that all manufacturers must provide the end user with a Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS).*

*A MSDS contains an enormous amount of data about the hazards associated with the product being described in the MSDS sheet.*

Some of the data shown on the MSDS sheet is also outlined on the label affixed to the container (i.e. tube, can, carton, jar, drum, etc.). In almost every case, the name and address of the chemical manufacturer includes an 800 number where the manufacturer can be reached (day or night) should an emergency arise.

A typical jobsite might have one-hundred or more toxic chemicals on site, meaning that the foreman must also have an MSDS sheet for each of the 100-or-more chemicals, and the list must be alphabetized so that the jobsite foreman can easily find the correct MSDS sheet for the corresponding container.

Of all the data that is shown on the MSDS sheet, the section entitled **First-Aid Treatment** is the most important to all workers. This section tells the first-aid giver (or the emergency rescue squad personnel) how to go about treating the worker that has accidentally been exposed to one or more caustic agents (chemicals).

It clearly outlines the steps to be taken, the remedies recommended, types of first-aid to be administered, a number of "do's" and "don'ts" and what symptoms to look for on the exposed/injured worker (such as inflammation of skin areas, swelling, bleeding, blistering, nausea, dizziness, unconsciousness, burns, etc.).

The three-ring binder containing your company's MSDS binder must be accessible to all workers, and is typically kept in the jobsite work trailer...or the foreman's vehicle. Each worker should know the whereabouts of this MSDS binder, and should ask their supervisor if they don't. The data contained in these MSDS sheets can, in many cases, mean the difference between life and death.

### **A Written Program**

You need to know that your employer must have a "written program" that outlines how your company addresses its in-house Right-to-Know Program. In this written plan it describes the key portions of the program, such as:

- Specific company policies
- Enforcement procedures
- The manner in which the company will keep a written list of its toxic substances that are on jobsites
- How Material Safety Data Sheets are distributed, and
- The type of personal protective equipment that the company will require field personnel to use and wear.

Now that's a pretty tall order for most of us to completely understand, but the written program is nothing more than an outline of how the company will implement its Right-to-Know Program, and what

tools they will use to help you understand how this OSHA standard is designed to protect you in the workplace.

In the company's written program, they commit themselves to the task of insuring that all workers are protected from exposure to chemicals, caustic agents, and those toxic substances that can ignite, cause toxic fumes, impair eyesight, or even lead to major injury, or death.

*Your part in this important program is to participate in company sponsored Safety Talks, to ask questions about anything that is not entirely clear to you, and to inform your supervisor (foreman, crew chief, superintendent) if you suspect that you are being exposed to toxic substances and adequate protection is not being provided to you.*