

## **WHAT'S AN MSDS SHEET?**



*Do you think it's your "right" to know what type of chemicals you are using on your jobsites? Do you think your foreman should let you know if there are any lethal fumes on your jobsite that can make you sick, or possibly kill you? Well, that's what OSHA's RIGHT-TO-KNOW law is all about. It's your "right to know" what is outlined in the **Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS)** that are in your foreman's office trailer.*

### **WHAT'S AN MSDS SHEET?**

When OSHA's *Hazardous Communication Standard* was introduced to the construction industry, it required all manufacturers to compile a description of chemicals that they manufacturer and distribute to all industries.

This description of "chemicals" is laid out in a form OSHA calls MATERIAL SAFETY DATA SHEET, and contains eight separate sections:

- SECTION I.....Manufacturer's Name/Address/Etc.
- SECTION II.....Hazardous Ingredients/Identity Information
- SECTION III.....Physical/Chemical Characteristics
- SECTION IV.....Fire and Explosion Hazard Data
- SECTION V.....Reactivity Data
- SECTION VI.....Health Hazard Data
- SECTION VII..... Precautions for Safe Handling and Use
- SECTION VIII....Control Measures

### **HOW MANY CHEMICALS ON YOUR JOBSITE?**

It's possible that even a small jobsite has up to 100 separate "chemicals" either stored or being used by the workers daily. Here's a short, short list that might surprise you:

- |            |                 |               |                |
|------------|-----------------|---------------|----------------|
| • Cement   | • Solvents      | • Gasoline    | • Oil          |
| • PVC Glue | • Paint         | • Batteries   | • Grease       |
| • Mastics  | • Thinners      | • Wiper Fluid | • Formaldehyde |
| • Glues    | • Kerosene      | • Anti-Freeze | • Insecticides |
| • Bleaches | • Ammonia       | • Creosote    | • Epoxy Resins |
| • Asbestos | • Sulfuric Acid | • Putty       |                |

## **AN EMPLOYEES RESPONSIBILITY**

You, the employee, have the following *responsibilities* under OSHA's Hazardous Communication Standard (HazCom):

- Know *where MSDS sheets are* on your jobsites.
- Report *any hazards* you spot on your jobsite to your supervisor.
- Know the physical and *health hazards* of any hazardous materials on your jobsite, and know and practice the precautions needed to protect yourself from these hazards.
- Know what to do *in an emergency*.
- Know the *location and content* of your employer's "written" hazard communication program.

## **READ THE LABELS**

Most of the information that appears on a Material Safety Data Sheet is also *included on the labels* of these hazardous chemical containers.

On these same labels, you can *also find the 800 number* of the manufacturer, if you encounter an emergency associated with a particular chemical (and don't know what to do about it). Call the 800 number listed and describe your "emergency" to the manufacturer's agent.

## **PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT**

On the MSDS sheets, and the product labels, you can often times find directions as to what type of *personal protective equipment*/apparel that you need to use to protect yourself from the "hazards" associated with a particular toxic substance.

In many cases, the manufacturer suggests

- Wear rubber gloves (or latex)
- Wear wrap-around safety goggles
- Wear protective clothing
- Use a respirator
- Have eye-wash available to jobsite
- Have hand-washing water on-site
- Have emergency phone numbers (911, etc.)
- Have first-aid handy
- Do not eat until you have washed your hands
- Know physical location of nearest hospital, clinic.

*One out of every four workers contracts hazardous chemicals on the job. In many cases, the chemicals you deal with may be no more dangerous than those you use at home. But in the workplace, exposure is likely to be greater, concentrations higher, and exposure time longer. Thus, potential danger is greater on the job. (READ THOSE LABELS...READ THOSE LABELS)*